The Study of the Word of Jesus

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The passages inside quotation marks were taken from the King James Bible.
The passages in bold, written in **blue (128)**, are words attributed to Jesus Christ.
The passages in bold, written in **red (255)**, are words attributed to God.
The passages in bold, written in **red (128)**, are words attributed to the Holy Spirit.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

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To the true Author of this work,
to whom I dedicate my whole being.

To my brothers and sisters in the Church of Christ,
for their fundamental support on this journey.

To my family,
for their support and understanding.

Our Father, who art in heaven... come and dwell within us...
Hallowed be Thy Name... and sanctify also our hearts...
Thy Kingdom come, Lord... to reign within us... so that
Thy will be done in our lives, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread and
inspire us to share it with our brothers and sisters.
Forgive us our trespasses... forgive us our debts;
Just as we forgive our offenders and debtors
Do not let us fall into temptation... especially the temptation to judge our brothers
But deliver us from evil... especially the evil that exists within us...
For we are Yours
Teach us then to love You and to serve You,
through love and service to our neighbor
As Your Beloved Son, our Master, Lord and Savior... Christ Jesus taught us
Who one day died on that cross to glorify Your name
In whose name we boldly pray, gratefully
For Yours is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory forever...
Amen!

THE STUDY OF THE WORD OF JESUS

INTRODUCTION

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”.
John 1:1

The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament defines the Greek term “λόγος” (logos) as a versatile and complex noun meaning "word", “message”, "discourse", “speech”, "reason" or “intelligence”. In our study, we will employ mainly two of these meanings. Using it as a synonym for **“term”** (lexical unit), we will write **“word”** with a lowercase **“w”**. Using it as a synonym for **“message”**, we will write **“Word”** with an uppercase **“W”**, which also corresponds to the Greek **“Logos”** (as it is used in some passages of the King James Version). The bolded passages in **blue (128)** are **Words** attributed to Jesus Christ. The bolded passages in **red (255)** are **Words** attributed to God. The bolded passages in **red (128)** are **Words** attributed to the Holy Ghost.

“These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs:
but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs,
but I shall shew you plainly of the Father.”
John 16:25.

The aim of this work is to study Jesus' messages. We will not be overly concerned with how it was said or the language in which it was uttered, but rather with the teaching it conveys to us in the present day. The fact that Jesus richly used proverbs, parables, figures, and comparisons in His ministry leads us to adopt this associative approach. Before speaking to the intellect, this message is intended for our spirit (or, as Jesus used to say, for our hearts), and, more than informing, it is intended to build up the life of the one who learns to love and keep the Words of Salvation. For this approach, I use the King James Version.

“And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the Word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.”
Acts 20:32

The classical hermeneutical approaches usually start from the principle that the essential meaning of the biblical text must be found in the original language in which it was written. However, my main exegetical tool for understanding God’s message is Neurolinguistics. Neurolinguistics (simply put) is the science that studies the **brain's languages and the representations** used in communication. In the neurolinguistic approach, what is essential is not the lexical definition of the word, but the **cognitive associations** that gave rise to it and the impact the author of the message wishes to produce on the receptor. In this way, I understand that God's message, given to a specific people, may not be intended only for them but may also be formulated for all humanity. For this purpose, God used a language rich in nonverbal **representations** and prescribed for Jesus a Word full of **figures of speech**. Thus, God’s message **transcends the meaning of the word** and, regardless of the translation or version, the Holy Ghost makes itself understood to those who “have eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to understand”. For a corollary, the spiritual understanding of Jesus’ Word is not for all.

“Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my Word.” John 8:43

I start from this principle to study the Biblical text for three reasons:

1. Jesus' own Word testifies to the unbreakability of the Holy Scriptures. If I believe in Jesus, I cannot disbelieve the Scriptures. To doubt Scripture is to doubt Jesus.

“If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came,

and the scripture cannot be broken;"
John 10:35

2. In many situations, the Holy Scriptures were not written in the language in which they were spoken, especially the Words of Jesus, which were spoken in Aramaic or Hebrew and further translated into Greek, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, many years after they were spoken. This attests that the unbreakability of the New Testament is not an attribute of the "original text," which no longer exists, but only the translations.

"These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you."
But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost,
whom the Father will send in my name,
He shall teach you all things,
and bring all things to your remembrance,
whatsoever I have said unto you..
John 14:25,26

3. The Holy Ghost does not use a specific language to transmit His messages, but He Himself ministers the gift of "speaking in tongues," that is, translating into the listener's native language the message originally spoken through the preacher's native language, as reported in chapter two of Acts. Since the Holy Ghost is the one who grants understanding of the Word, by corollary, we can believe that He also ensures the integrity of the translations of His message, regardless of the synonyms used in different versions.

"And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire,
and it sat upon each of them."
"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost,
and began to speak with other tongues,
as the Spirit gave them utterance."
Acts 2:3-4

The Bible is the only recognized source for the study of the Word of Jesus. But it does not contain only Jesus' Words. There are more than twenty types of speeches in the Bible, which we can recognize, sometimes easily, sometimes with difficulty. The message does not always belong to the one who verbally transmitted it, but in most cases, the authorship is clearly indicated. In the Bible, the quoted word is also quite common: a message previously uttered by a protagonist, which, having already read it in the Tanakh, is again uttered by another protagonist who had previously studied it. In this case, the authorship belongs to the original author, but the protagonist who quotes the message authenticates it and confers authority, highlighting its importance. Let us look at some examples of messages according to authorship (sender), recipient, medium, and message.

THE COMPONENTS OF SPEECH

Read chapters 20 and 21 from Exodus, and then read Matthew chapter 5, verses 17 to 48.

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." Matthew 5: 21-22.

The Word **"Thou shalt not kill"** was engraved on stone among the Ten Commandments given to Moses by God on Mount Sinai. According to Jesus, it was said for "**them of old time**". Jesus identifies the recipients of the message here: the men who lived in the Age of Mosaic Law. When Jesus adds, **"But I say unto you"** besides establishing another **recipient**: the men who would live in the Age of Grace, Jesus also introduces another **sender** of the message: Himself. In a similar way, He transmits to them another message, which does not revoke, but comes to fulfill and elaborate on the Law as the purpose of Grace. If there were no Law, there would be no Grace.

When analyzing the Word as a synonym for message or communication, we must always identify the **participating** elements of the discourse, namely: the **addresser** of the Word (the author or sender), the **addressee** of the Word (the receiver), and the **vehicle** of the Word (the one who transmits

it). This is important so that we can properly value the **content** or message involved, especially when we realize that the Word comes from God and we are the addressees.

1. God's Word

"And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, **"Where art thou?" Genesis 3:9**

Addresser: God
Addressee: Adam.
Vehicle: None. God speaks directly to man.
Message: Manifest yourself! Appear! Tell me: "Where are you?" In this case, God speaks directly to Adam. The origin and destiny are clear, and there is no intermediary.

But let's do a neurolinguistic exercise: imagine what is in God's mind when He utters this message, and what effect He wishes to produce in Adam's mind. First, starting from the knowledge that God is Omnipresent and Omnipotent, we assume that God already knew where Adam was. He also knew what he had done. The text does not explain how these words were uttered. Aloud? With deception? Angry? With tenderness? That is where the Holy Ghost works inside the reader's mind. The readers may interpret this question according to their own state of mind, and it is here that the Holy Ghost can influence the believer.

With this **rhetorical question**, God was **awakening Adam's consciousness,** which now begins to ask itself: "Where am I?"; "What have I done?"; "What will be God's reaction?"; "What will happen to me now?" These are questions that apply not only to Adam, but extend to all humanity: where are we in relation to God?

"And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land of Canaan; (this is the land that shall fall unto you for an inheritance, even the land of Canaan with the coasts thereof:)." Numbers 34:1-2.

Sender: God.
Recipient: The children of Israel (or Jacob), also called Israelites.
Vehicle: Moses.
Message: The Land of Canaan is your inheritance!

"And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee. And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me. And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day. For they are impudent children and stiffhearted. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD". Ezequiel 2:1-4

Sender: God.
Recipient: The rebellious children of Israel.
Vehicle: Ezekiel held by the Spirit.
Message: Listen! You are rebelling against the LORD!

"And the LORD said unto me: **They have well-spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him."** Deuteronomy 18.17-19.

Sender: God
Recipient: All men.
Vehicle: Moses.
Message: I will send Jesus, into whose mouth I will place my Words, and I will hold accountable all those who do not heed him.

"Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth." Isaiah 42. 1-3.

Sender: God

Recipient: All men who receive this message. This includes Israelites and non-Israelites (Gentiles).

Vehicle: Isaiah.

Message: I will send Jesus, upon whom I will put my Spirit, and He will bring forth judgment unto truth.

Note the figurative language here: "break the bruised reed"; "quenching the smoking flax." To those who do not understand the language of the Spirit, this seems like the talk of a madman. Through these **metaphors**, God was simply declaring that Jesus would not despise the poor, the helpless, the lepers, the demon-possessed, the humble people who had suffered enough to receive God's mercy.

"While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said: **This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."** Matthew 17 5.

Sender: God
Recipient: All men who receive this message.
Vehicle: None. God speaks in an audible voice from heaven.
Message: Jesus is my beloved Son. Listen to Him.

Note that this is the last recorded passage in the Bible in which God delivers a direct message to man (in John 12:28, God speaks to Jesus). After God commands us to listen to His Son, He ceases to manifest Himself directly to man. Note also the coherence and maintenance of style among these various Words spoken at very different times and in very different situations.

2. The Word of Jesus as the Son of Man (incarnated)

"Jesus answered and said unto him: **If a man loves me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.**" John 14: 23-24.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." John 5: 24.

"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him: **If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.**" John 8: 31-32.

"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." John 14:21.

"Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also." John 15:20

Sender: God
Recipient: All men.
Vehicle: Jesus
Message: Jesus is the Logos. This means that Jesus, as the Son of Man, is the incarnation of the Word (Logos) of God. The **central theme** of the incarnated Jesus is the **very Word that God prescribed for Him**. Therefore, hearing the Word, believing in the Word, remaining in the Word, having the Word, keeping the Word, and speaking the Word are key elements for His redemptive action in the believer. This is what we will study in this book.

3. The Word of Jesus as the Spirit

"And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me: **Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?** And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me: **I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.** Acts 22:7-8.

Sender: Jesus as Spirit
Recipient: Saul of Tarsus (who would change his name to Paul)
Vehicle: None, the Spirit of Jesus speaks directly to Saul

Message: Jesus presents himself to Saul, confronting him about his beliefs and attitudes.

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hears my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. Revelation 3:8 and 20-22.

Sender: Jesus as Spirit.
Recipient: The Churches.
Vehicle: The Apostle John.
Message: A prophetic message where the Spirit of Jesus emphasizes His Word as an essential tool for victory. Those who keep the Word and listen to the voice of Jesus are those who have intimacy with Him, will be called victors, and will serve Him on the throne of the kingdom of heaven.

The book of Revelation is Jesus' revelation to the apostle John (from a spiritual perspective) of what is reserved for God's creatures in the future. As the Son of Man (being incarnate among us), Jesus leaves us a Word that is closer and more accessible, speaking whenever possible through parables and comparisons. As Spirit, Jesus continues to speak to our hearts through simple comparisons, which he himself experienced during his incarnate journey on Earth, but also adds a more spiritual dimension to his apocalyptic prophecies, which are more difficult to understand. Currently, many works have been published on the interpretation of this message.

4. The Word of Jesus as the LORD

"And he said: **Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed."** Isaiah 6:9-10

Sender: Jesus as THE LORD.
Recipient: Isaiah.
Vehicle: None, Jesus speaks directly to Isaiah.
Message: When Isaiah had the vision of the "Lord," he was in the presence of Jesus himself. John makes this clear in verse 41 of his Gospel, chapter 12. Jesus (the LORD) here speaks about prophetic language. The codification of His Word is only revealed to those who are chosen by the Father.

"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound" Isaiah 61:1

"And he began to say unto them: **This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."** Luke 4:21.

By assuming the prophecy given to Isaiah, Jesus takes responsibility for the words spoken. Even if He wasn't the one who directly transmitted these words to Isaiah (which doesn't make much sense), He Himself certainly dictated them and ordered them to be transmitted to Isaiah. But by reading these words, written in the first-person singular, in the synagogue of Nazareth, and affirming that the prophecy was fulfilled, Jesus assumes authorship of them and clearly shows that He was present in the leadership of His people long before His incarnation in His redemptive mission.

5. The Word of the Spirit of the LORD (or Holy Ghost)

"**Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, came the Spirit of the LORD in the midst of the congregation; and he said: Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's."** 2 Chronicles 20: 14-15.

Sender: The Spirit of the LORD.
Recipient: The tribe of Israelites descended from Judah who lived at that specific historical moment, under the reign of King Jehoshaphat.
Vehicle: The Levite Jaaziel.
Message: God will fight for you against the approaching enemy.

"As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said: **Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."** Acts 13:2.

Sender: The Spirit of the LORD.
Recipient: The congregation of Christians who were specifically meeting at that historical moment to worship the LORD.
Vehicle: Not determined by Scripture.
Message: Send Barnabas and Saul on missionary work.

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that: **in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;"** 1 Timothy 4:1.

Sender: The Spirit of the LORD.
Recipient: Paul's letter was addressed to Timothy, but once incorporated into the Scriptures, it becomes addressed to all Christians, especially those of the last days.
Vehicle: The apostle Paul.
Message: In the last days, some will depart from the faith by obeying deceiving spirits and teachings of demons.

"Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus." Acts 1. 16.

The narrator doesn't always make it clear how the Word of the Spirit was spoken; whether audibly to all, or in the hearts of those present. The Spirit of God generally communicates through the inspiration of set-apart men, who, according to the type of message and the historical moment in which they live, are called prophets, chroniclers, wise men, psalmists, or apostles. These men are not expressing their own ideas but are ministers of the Word. This idea is expressed on several occasions in the Bible; let's look at some examples of verses where it is quite clear:

"The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin:" Jeremias 1:1.
"Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me: **Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth."** Jeremiah 1:9.

Sender: Jeremiah and the LORD. Possibly the Holy Ghost, or the very Spirit of the Lord Jesus, as revealed by John in Isaiah's vision.
Recipient: The prophecies given to Jeremiah were initially intended for God's people living at that time, but they also applied to events that would occur much later, thus being intended for God's people in a universal way.
Vehicle: Jeremiah.
Message: Jeremiah testifies; the LORD assures that He speaks through Jeremiah's mouth.

6. The man's Word

"And he said: **I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.**" Adam in Genesis 3:10.

Sender: Adam, the first man.
Recipient: God.
Vehicle: None.
Message: Confession of his shame and his sinful state.

"Then said Mary unto the angel: **How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?**"
"And Mary said: **Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.** And the angel departed from her." Mary in Luke 1:34 and 38.

Sender: Mary of Nazareth.
Recipient: The messenger angel of the LORD.
Vehicle: None.
Message: I am a servant of the Lord, and I am willing to serve Him according to His will.

The Word of man in the Bible must be separated from the Word inspired by the Spirit. It varies from Adam's confession, recognizing himself naked, both carnally and spiritually, before God, to the Word of the Lord's servant, who, through faith and submission to God, is clothed in holiness to be chosen as the mother of the Savior. Below, we see two texts written by two evangelists that confront each other, presenting very different information:

"**And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias, and Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa;**" Matthew 1:6-7.

"Which was the son of Melea, which was the son of Menan, which was the son of Mattatha, which was the son of Nathan, which was the son of David, which was the son of Jesse, which was the son of Obed, which was the son of Booz, which was the son of Salmon, which was the son of Naasson," Luke 3:31-32

Matthew was a contemporary of Joseph in Capernaum, and they probably knew each other, while Luke, as a historian (since he did not participate in Jesus' discipleship), likely interviewed Mary after the Resurrection. When we study the accounts of Jesus' conception and the events surrounding his birth, we clearly see that Matthew presents Joseph's perspective, while Luke presents Mary's.

Both Evangelists endeavored to trace Joseph's lineage, which, for the Gospel narrative, would make no sense, since Joseph was not the biological father of Jesus. The two evangelists contradict each other on an essential point: for Matthew, Joseph was a descendant of Solomon; while for Luke, Joseph was a descendant of Nathan, another son of King David. This controversy clearly shows that these **were not inspired words** but were born of men's (even Evangelists') desire to contribute to the narrative in a human or historical sense.

In any case, these two short passages attest that the Word of man, as described in the Bible, is not inerrant like the Word of God, and that the Word of man, like leaven, can contaminate and inflate the Word inspired by God. Probably God allowed this difference in the texts to reinforce the idea that Jesus was His own Son and not a descendant of Joseph. Therefore, we need to be aware that the Word recorded by man in the sacred texts is not always the inspired Word; when it is, however, it can have several different connotations. The prophet is the one who announces God's plan. The chronicler (scribe) is the one who recounts the history of God's people. The psalmist essentially has a Word of praise to God. The wise man is the one who transmits to man the teachings of God's Wisdom, and the Apostle is the one who proclaims the Gospel of the Word of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let's look at some examples:

7. The Words inspired by the Holy Spirit to the prophets

"And the Spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man." 1 Samuel 10:6.

Sender: Samuel, inspired by the Spirit of the LORD.
Recipient: The future King Saul.
Vehicle: The prophet Samuel.
Message: The Spirit of the LORD will take hold of your life; you will be transformed into another man, and you will prophesy through your mouth.

"And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it. The voice said: Cry! And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever." Isaiah 40:5-8.

Sender: The Spirit of the LORD.
Recipient: All men who receive this message.
Vehicle: The prophet Isaiah.
Message: Man is mortal and limited, while the Word of the LORD possesses eternal and infinite power.

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." John the Baptist in Matthew 3:11-12.

Sender: John the Baptist, inspired by the Spirit of the LORD.
Recipient: All men who receive this message.
Vehicle: The prophet John the Baptist.

Message: Jesus is coming soon to baptize his chosen ones in the Holy Spirit and separate God's people from the condemned people.

These are biblical prophecies that have already been fulfilled. Isaiah prophesies about Jesus and his predecessor, John the Baptist. John, in turn, prophesies about Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Note the **figurative language** again: grass, flower, breath of the Lord, axe, shovel, root, wheat, barn, straw, fire. **Spiritual language** is that which can only be understood through the intervention of the Holy Ghost and, therefore, is not accessible to those who are not open to Him.

8. The Words inspired by the Holy Spirit to the psalmist

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."
Psalms 119:11.

Sender: David, inspired by the Spirit of the LORD.
Recipient: God
Vehicle: None, David speaks directly to God
Message: A clear and concise message, this Word is a commitment from David to God, stemming from the understanding generated by the Holy Spirit in his mind and heart. It is also a precious teaching for all believers on the best strategy for not sinning against God.
The inspired Word to the psalmist may have prophetic, poetic, or didactic connotations, but its greatest emphasis is praise to the Creator, the exaltation of His Holy name, and sometimes the proposal of a commitment from the believer to God.

9. The Word inspired by the Holy Spirit to the wise

"I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions."
"Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways." Proverbs 8:12-32.
"A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger." Proverbs 15:1.
"Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles." Proverbs 21: 23.

Sender: Solomon, inspired by the Spirit of the LORD.
Recipient: All men who receive this message.
Vehicle: Solomon.
Message: The Word of God fills the lives of those who keep it with wisdom and prudence and shows them the paths to a life full of peace and happiness.
Wisdom (another name for the Holy Spirit) is the understanding given to man by the Spirit of God. It does not focus on commandments per se, but on knowledge and advice for a better life.

10. The Word inspired by the Holy Spirit to the Apostle

"Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." James 1:21-22.

Sender: James, inspired by the Spirit of the LORD.
Recipient: All men who receive this message.
Vehicle: James.
Message: The apostle exhorts us to receive with meekness the Word implanted in us, becoming doers and not merely hearers, so that the power of the Word may save our souls.

"Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Colossians 3:16.

Sender: Paul. Inspired by the Spirit of the LORD.
Recipient: All men who receive this message.
Vehicle: Paul.

Message: Note that Paul specifies the Word of Christ, differentiating it from the Word of God; here, he recommends that the Colossians cultivate the Word of Christ in their lives and live in communion with the LORD.

"**And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife."** 1 Corinthians 7:10-11

Sender: The Lord Jesus
Recipient: All married men and women
Vehicle: Paul.
Message: During His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus made it clear that Christian marriage is a union of one flesh and that "what God has joined together, let no one separate" (Matthew 19:6). This word spoken by Paul is a reference to this express command of Jesus and does not constitute a new mandate in any way. However, Paul did not accompany Jesus in His incarnate mission. Paul had a spiritual communion with the resurrected Christ, who personally instructed him.

"But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away." 1 Corinthians 7:12.

Sender: Paul.
Recipient: All men and women living together in a non-Christian marriage.
Vehicle: Paul.
Message: To make it clear that this is advice, not a commandment, Paul instructs Christians living together that non-Christian marriage should also be indissoluble, and that the spouse's lack of faith is not a reason to dissolve the marriage. The principle for non-Christian marriage is the same as for Christian marriage. In this case, Paul is giving advice based on his wisdom.

"Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be. Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. 1 Corinthians 7:25-27.

Sender: Paul.
Recipient: The single and the married.
Vehicle: Paul.
Message: Paul makes it clear again that this is only his opinion. And he advises believers, in his wisdom and understanding of the historical moment, not to separate or marry.

"And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece." 1 John 2: 3-6.

Sender: The Holy Spirit
Recipient: To believers (or those who call themselves believers).
Vehicle: John.
Message: The Word of Jesus perfects the love of God in the true believer who abides in Him and thus lives as He lived.

12. The Word inspired by the Holy Spirit to the preacher

"And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say." Luke 12:11-12

Read chapters 6 and 7 of the book of Acts.

"And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost" Acts 7:5.

“This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us.” Acts 7:38

“But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God” Acts 7:55.

Sender: Stephen, inspired by the Holy Spirit
Recipient: Those who attended Stephen's trial in the Sanhedrin
Vehicle: Stephen
Message: Stephen was inspired by the Holy Ghost to deliver his sermon to the Sanhedrin, explaining in detail God’s plan for His people and how Jesus fulfilled the prophecies. The word “oracle” comes from the Latin verb “ōrāre”, meaning "to speak". Oracle was the name of the priestess dedicated to prophetic predictions inspired by Greek deities. Stephen used the word in its extended use, referring to the **oracular utterances** themselves. In the context, it metaphorically refers to **God’s message**, presenting it as a living message prevenient from God, destined for the patriarchs of the Jews.

12. A Word inspired by the Holy Spirit to the recorder and the scribe

“And Joab the son of Zeruiah was over the host; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud, recorder. And Zadok the son of Ahitub, and Abimelech the son of Abiathar, were the priests; and Shavsha was scribe." 1 Chronicles 18:14-15.

“And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.” Matthew 9:35.

“Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,” Luke 24:45.

“When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.” John 2.22

“Then said he unto them: Therefore, every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.” Matthew 13:52.

In some texts, the recorder (chronicler or scribe) does not transmit messages, but rather facts, events, feelings, emotions, and impressions left by the historical moment. In this last example, John differentiates between faith in the ancient Scriptures and faith in the Word of Jesus. Even after three years of accompanying Him in His ministry, the disciples did not have true faith, as they all fled and even denied Him on Calvary. Only after the resurrection, when Jesus opened their understanding, did the faith in Scripture align with faith in His Word, and the disciples were truly able to believe. In this case, the sender is always the writer of the text, acting as a witness, and the recipient is always the reader.

13. The Word of the Angels

“And the angel came in unto her, and said, **Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.** And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, **Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end**.” Luke 1. 28-33.

Sender: God. Mary did not know the meaning of the greeting, but when the angel announces, "**The Lord is with you,**" she understands that he came at the Lord's command.
Recipient: Mary.
Vehicle: The Angel sent by the Lord.
Message: The angel brings a specific message to Mary. The author of this message is not the angel, but God, who sends the angel in His name to announce to Mary that she would be the biological mother of Jesus.

"And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, **Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.** And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning." Acts 11:13-14.

Sender: Firstly, the angel, and then Simon Peter. However, the Holy Ghost played a special part in its understanding.
Recipient: The centurion Cornelius.
Vehicle: None.
Message: The angel brought a specific message for Cornelius. The message was to seek Peter to receive another Word whereby he and his family should be saved.

"And I John saw these things and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. Then saith he unto me: **See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.** Revelation 22. 8-9.

Today it is very easy to acquire a book; especially a Bible. At the time when the angel spoke this Word to John, "books" were rare and very expensive. In fact, they were scrolls written on papyrus or animal hide, and few people had access to them. So what believers did was "keep" the Word. They memorized it and repeated it to themselves and to others, intending to be instructed by it and to be able to walk according to God's will. But the Word was not simply memorized; it was also kept in the heart. They were loved and respected, for they had been spoken by God. They were, therefore, the true treasure of believers. And those who keep the Word of God are fellow servants of the angels and prophets.

Sender: The Angel
Recipient: John
Vehicle: The Angel
Message: The angel corrects John's wrong attitude, who prostrates himself to worship him, and at the same time sends a message to all of humanity.

14. The Word of the unclean spirit

"And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit" Mark 5:2.

"But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, and cried with a loud voice, and said: **What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.** For he said unto him, **Come out of the man**, thou unclean spirit. And he asked him, **What is thy name?** And he answered, saying, **My name is Legion: for we are many**." And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country. Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. And all the devils besought him, saying: **Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.** Mark 5:6-12.

Sender: The unclean spirit
Recipient: Jesus
Vehicle: The possessed man
Message: The unclean spirits, realizing that Jesus would cast them out of the possessed man, begged permission to enter the pigs. By doing this, they manifested their existence and nature to the world (the pig was considered an unclean animal by the Jews). The existence of unclean spirits tormenting men is a disturbing idea. But to defend ourselves, we have the power of Jesus' Word. True believers who keep this Word and serve as a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit receive merciful deliverance from this condition of possession, described in the Gospels.

15. The Word of the lying spirit

"Therefore, the king of Israel gathered together four hundred men of prophets, and said unto them, Shall we go to Ramoth Gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, **Go up; for God will deliver it into the king's hand.** But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might enquire of him? 2 Chronicles 18:5-6.

"Then there came out a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, **I will entice him**. And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, **I will go out, and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.** And the LORD said, **Thou shalt entice him, and thou shalt also prevail: go out, and do even so.** Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil against thee." 2 Cr. 18. 20 – 21.

Sender: The deceiving spirit (with the LORD's command).
Recipient: Ahab, the king of Israel, at that specific historical moment when he was about to begin a battle in which he would lose his life.
Vehicle: The false prophets.
Message (of deception): Israel will have victory over Ramoth-Gilead.
This passage is very enlightening. False prophets are not only those who deceive, but also those who are deceived. Lack of faithfulness to the Lord generates these unusual situations in which false prophets are deceived by spirits acting under the Lord's permission.

16. The Word of the devil

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward hungry. And when the tempter came to him, he said: **If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.** But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him: **If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.** Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him: **All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.** Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto him. Matthew 4:1-11.

Sender: Satan
Recipient: Jesus
Vehicle: None
Message: Abandon your human nature and your redemptive mission and return to being the Son of God.

"Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, **Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.** But he turned, and said unto Peter: **Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.**" Matthew 16: 22-23.

Sender: Satan
Recipient: Jesus
Vehicle: Peter
Message: Abandon your human nature and your redemptive mission and return to being the Son of God.

Note that in the first example Satan communicates directly with Jesus, but in the second example he uses Peter's mouth. Jesus, however, unmasks him, leaving us a valuable lesson on how to recognize Satan's word. Notice that Satan acts as a tempter, being much more subtle than unclean spirits who act in a more brutal way. Note also that Jesus' word has effective power against Satan's pernicious influence.

17. The Word of the animal

"And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam: **What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?** And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee. And the ass said unto Balaam**, Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee?** And he said, Nay. Numbers 22:28.

Sender: The LORD
Recipient: Balaam

Vehicle: The donkey
Message: Stop and think, Balaam: What are you doing?

"And the serpent said unto the woman: **Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."** Genesis 3:4-5.

Sender: The devil
Recipient: Eve
Vehicle: The serpent
Message: Disobey God, and you will be like Him.

Since animals are intelligent but non-verbal, they lack the capacity to convey a verbally elaborate message. In the first case, God made the donkey speak; in the second, Satan is the author of the serpent's words.

18. The Word of the vegetable

"But the olive tree said unto them, **Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?** Judges 9:9.

Sender: Jotham
Recipient: His enemies
Medium: Jotham through an allegory
Message: Should the one destined to serve be in the leadership of the people?

An allegory is a parable in which the author, in this case Jotham, attributes messages to elements incapable of communicating. The objective was to provoke the men who had eliminated his family to usurp his leadership. Jotham attributes the reasoning used by the human protagonists to a group of trees.

19. The Word of the Cross

"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." 1 Corinthians 1:18

In this short phrase, addressed to the Church in Corinth, the Apostle Paul reveals the meaning of the word "word" as a synonym for "message." By referring to the "Word of the Cross," he explains the entire purpose of the symbolism proposed by the crucifixion, which is not understood by the world, but rather understood as madness by those who have not been touched by the saving power of God.

"And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them: **Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."** Mark 8.34

Even before being crucified, Jesus embraced the symbolism of the cross and associated it with the denial of the ego and the sacrifice of the personal for the sake of the spiritual. The Cross of Christ has a powerful message and is also a Word of Jesus.

20. The Word of Works

"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" John 9:4-5

"Jesus answered them: **I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me."** John 10:25

"If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him." John 10:37-38

Jesus was walking in the temple, in Solomon's Portico, when the Jews questioned him, because they could not understand Jesus' Word. Jesus then showed them a way: believing in the testimony of

works is a way to understand Jesus' Word. The works themselves also have a message and a testimony, and therefore are also the "Word" of Jesus. Interestingly, it was in this same place, Solomon's Portico, that the apostles met to continue doing the works, or the "signs and wonders" that testified of Jesus. Jesus' miracles are nonverbal Words that convey a message of salvation to the believer's soul.

21. The Word of figures and comparisons

"These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father." John 16:25

The comparisons, parables, and figures of speech employed by Jesus produce a "mental image" that aids in understanding the Spiritual Truths taught by the Master. Jesus came with the specific objective of teaching what is essential for strengthening faith: the Word of Salvation. It made no sense to come to Earth to give a complete course on the workings of the spiritual world. His mission was to supply the basic needs ("bread," "water," and "light") of humankind. The figures of speech, comparisons, and parables, once described, take on a life of their own in the human mind, are unconsciously incorporated into daily routines, and are easily retransmitted by the community. Even small children can assimilate them. Jesus makes it clear that after assimilating the basics, the believer would be prepared to know the Spiritual Truths in greater detail.

Why the Word of Jesus?

"Jesus cried and said: **He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak."** John 12: 44-50.

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." John 1:14.

The preparation of this short study on the Word of Jesus was motivated by the great transformation it brought about in my life.

The study of the Bible is a very complex task. All parts are important and need to be known in due time, but the Word of Jesus is essential. As Christians, our priority is to keep the Word of Jesus by heart (a Latin expression meaning "from the heart"), for it is in our hearts that the Lord dwells and recognizes us as His own. Incipient faith can easily be lost through the Jewish traditions of the Old Testament. The brother who has not yet fully surrendered to Jesus may not find reasons to believe the Theology presented in the apostles' epistles and letters to the churches. How then will he accept John's visions in Revelation? But as we focus on the living and transformative Word of the Lord Jesus, grace is granted, and the believer's heart is touched.

This work is a Bible study. As such, it cannot be read in one sitting like a novel. It is an introspective study that can be completed individually or in a group, always accompanied by the reading and meditation of biblical references.

The approach used here differs from traditional exegesis and hermeneutics techniques. Not limited to the semantic meaning of words, as defined by the original languages in which the text was written, I seek, through associative interpretation and using neurolinguistic methodology, to decipher the meaning of the spiritual language in which the message was conceived. I therefore go beyond the vocabulary limitations of the Hebrew and Greek texts, searching for keys scattered throughout the biblical text to decipher a language little known to secular man: the language of the Spirit, in the conviction that this language transcends and is sovereign over any human vocabulary. The reason for this understanding is provided by Scripture itself, which reveals that, unlike human language, the Word of God has an inherent power capable of creating, inspiring, saving, and even judging humankind, being on several occasions treated as one of the divine natures shared by the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Comforter.

My main goal in this work is to encourage the study of the Word of Jesus and to share with my brothers and sisters some precious teachings that I have had the privilege of receiving in this field. Far

be it from me to produce a complete treatise, or even to give a final interpretation of all the Master's teachings.

May the fruit of this reading be to bring you a little closer to the living Word of your Savior.

EVERY ONE THAT IS PERFECT SHALL BE AS HIS MASTER

Read Luke 6.39-45.

"And he spake a parable unto them, **"Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch? The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master."** Luke 6:39-40.

"Then said he unto them, **Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."** Matthew 13:52.

One of the most striking characteristics of the words of Jesus is intertextuality.

Intertextuality is a feature of discourse that, by invoking another known discourse or text, borrows meaning from it, reaffirms it, establishes itself upon it, and builds concepts based on it.

Many of Jesus' words can only be fully understood and interpreted through concepts constructed intertextually. Those who know the Word of God in the Old Testament possess the tools to understand Christian messages based on prophecies previously sent by God to humanity; prophecies intended precisely to bear witness to God's plan.

THE FIRST WORDS OF JESUS FOR HIS DISCIPLES

Pick up your Bible and carefully read chapter 1 of the Gospel of John.

Have you read chapter 1 of the Gospel of John? God isn't playing games with you! If you haven't, get up from your armchair, find your Bible, and read it. This isn't a book of fiction or stories. It's a Bible study guide. If you've already read it, let's continue.

John the Baptist was one of the biblical figures most blessed by God.

He was granted the privilege of announcing the coming of the Messiah and "preparing the way of the Lord." He had the privilege of knowing Jesus personally and baptizing him in water so that the scriptures would be fulfilled. He received a mission from God and faithfully carried it out. He recognized the Messiah he preached, confessed him with his own mouth, and was confirmed by the Word of the Lord. The first words of Jesus' ministry recorded by John were spoken in this context. Two disciples of John the Baptist followed the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world," as the prophet indicated.

"Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them: **What seek ye?** They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou? John 1:38.

Jesus' first two disciples were from John the Baptist and began their discipleship by following Him. Can you put yourself in their position? Someone points you to the Messiah, and you begin to follow Him. You are walking along the road; you don't know where you're going; you have a certain hope; you believe in something undetermined, but powerful. Many doubts take hold of your soul, and

unexpectedly the Messiah himself turns to you and asks, **What seek ye?** (or in modern English: "**What are you looking for?**")

The disciples said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?"

Don't be, like the disciples, hasty in answering this question. Let it sink in. "**What are you looking for?**" It is Jesus who asks! These are his first words to you. "**What are you looking for?**"

"**What are you looking for?**" A question that should be a constant in your life. "**What are you looking for?**" … at work? "**What are you looking for?**" …in your family? "**What are you looking for?**" …in your studies? "**What are you looking for?**" …in dating? "**What are you looking for?**" …in marriage? "**What are you looking for?**" in leisure? "**What are you looking for?**" in conversations? "**What are you looking for?**" …at newsstands? "**What are you looking for?**" …in the streets? "**What are you looking for?**" …with your eyes? "**What are you looking for?**" **…**with your ears? "**What are you looking for?**" …with your hands? "**What are you looking for?**" **…**on television? "**What are you looking for?**" …on the internet? "**What are you looking for?**" …with Jesus? Answer to Jesus.

Human beings are always searching for something. It's in their very nature. Many don't know what they're looking for. Do you?

There's a popular saying that goes: "He who doesn't know what he's looking for, when he finds it, doesn't find it."

"What are you looking for?"

Define for yourself what you are seeking in your life. Define yourself with Jesus. Begin by keeping this Word. It's not difficult. Keep it and hold it constantly in your heart. Let Jesus himself ask you this same question several times a day. Answer Him and yourself several times a day. Define yourself with Him. Define yourself through Him.

"**What are you looking for?**" The disciples didn't know. But they wanted to know, and to hear the word of the Lamb of God. They asked where this would be: "Where are you staying?" If you also don't know, or if at least you're not sure, Jesus' answer is for you: **"Come and see."** Remember these words! Similar words to Philip, but more compelling: **"Follow me."** So, they went and stayed with Jesus. This is true discipleship. In it, the disciple follows the Master. Come, see, listen, learn, and follow. Not just learn but follow. Very different from a school where students sit in a chair and listen. Very different from a school where students need to be introduced to the teacher. The disciples weren't sure what they were looking for, but Jesus knew exactly what He wanted and whom He wanted. Jesus already knew His disciples intimately, even before seeing them, and He made this very clear. It was like that with Simon Peter, it was like that with Nathanael, and it is like that with you, too. Jesus is looking at you now, at this moment. He certainly knows your heart and your needs intimately. He has a plan for your life.

"He saith unto them: **Come and see.** They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour". John 1:39

"Come and see." When calling Nathanael, Philip began by using his own words: **"We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."** Nathanael's reaction was utter disdain: **"Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?"** Your words were of no use, Philip! Use then the words of the Master that you unknowingly engraved on your heart: **"Come and see."** These words are not yours, Philip! Nor is the miracle they worked in Nathanael's faith. But you were **the first Christian to keep and repeat the living Word of the Savior, and to witness the miracle it works. "Come and see."** The living Word of evangelism is working and reproducing like a snowball, being repeated by every believer to this day. **"What are you looking for?" "Come and see."** Keep these words and see the miracle they work.

WHAT SEEK YE?

Read chapter 6 of Matthew.

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Matthew 6:33

Jesus' first words lead us to a profound reflection on our own existence.

What is the reason for our existence? What is the meaning of our lives? What are our priorities? Jesus begins by questioning the existential foundations of human beings. He does not do this to induce an existential crisis, but to destroy worldly paradigms and build paradigms based on spiritual standards. This conversation is only the starting point for a series of lessons from the Master, which, although scattered throughout the Gospel, show a logical sequential constructivist pattern. Read chapter 6 of Matthew and pay attention to the lesson taught by the Master about anxiety about life and about the priorities of the human spirit.

To reshape paradigms and priorities, nothing is better than confronting contrasts. From verse 25, we select four keywords that neurolinguistically mark the confrontation of contrasts between material and spiritual priorities: "life"; "food"; "body"; and "clothing." Note that these words do not contrast with each other but are placed to establish (paradoxically) the contrast between material and spiritual concepts. The material concept causes man to seek the elements for his own survival. This is a basic animal instinct followed by all animal species. But the spiritual concept is what distinguishes man from animals, and the creature from the child of God. Jesus confronts us by saying what we should not seek and what we should seek. This contrast reveals the paradox between the mind of man and the mind of God.

To reveal this contrast, Jesus uses comparisons and hierarchies. He shows that God nourishes and clothes beings considered inferior to human beings (birds and lilies) and is interested in feeding and clothing those who cease seeking material things and turn to spiritual things. Within the concept of what should be sought spiritually, Jesus is also quite specific.

To follow Jesus, therefore, the first step is to detach oneself from the worries of the world. If we are overly occupied with material matters, we will not have time to deal with what really matters. **"Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?"** We need to have time for Jesus. Plenty of time, not a little. Daily, not just on Sundays. Time to study the Word, time to pray, time to think during the daily routine about what Jesus would do if He were in our place. Time for God. Time to set priorities. Time to stop and decide: **What seek ye?**

But it can also happen that, during an inner check-up, I might discover I'm not actually seeking anything. Disillusionment with life, accumulated frustrations, lack of perspective, vision, or courage often cause a person to hibernate in their feelings and live a life completely at the mercy of events and happenings. The question then becomes: Is it worth searching? Is it worth trying to achieve who-knows-what within a world we don't live in, or outside the world we do live in? If this is your case, open your Bible to Luke 11: 9-13.

"And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

It is Jesus' own Word that teaches us that seeking is worthwhile. Consequently, we understand that those who do not seek do not find, those who do not ask do not receive, and those who do not knock only find closed doors. Seek what should be sought and ask for what should be asked for (the Holy Spirit), then let us continue our search.

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; ..." Matthew 6:33.

Do you know the kingdom of men? Surely you do, for you live in it. Do you know the justice of men? Perhaps not as well as a lawyer, but you may have some idea of what it is. And what about the kingdom of God? Have you seen it? And what about the justice of God? Is it the same justice as that

of men? Perhaps it is presumptuous for a man to claim to know the kingdom or the justice of God. But through the Word of Jesus, we must seek these things, and first and foremost, not second.

SUFFICIENT UNTO THE DAY IS THE EVIL THEREOF

Read Chapter 6 of Matthew again.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. Matthew 6:13.

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Matthew 6:33-34.

In Chapter 6, Matthew recounts one of Jesus's most profound lessons regarding faith in the **"Heavenly Father."** In doing so, Jesus offers a glimpse into the crucial concept that underpins His entire ministry: the inexorable presence of **"evil"** on Earth. Jesus takes it for granted that each day has an **"evil thereof"**. This fundamental concept—which most people try to ignore—is the primary reason Jesus came to Earth on His threefold mission of Teaching, Illumination, and the Redemption of humanity. Note that Jesus distinguishes between at least two types of **"evil"**: the **"evil" intrinsic** to earthly existence and the **"evil"** produced by anxiety (or by a lack of faith in the **"Heavenly Father")**. In this lesson, Jesus focuses on the sovereignty of the **"Heavenly Father"** and the necessary trust His children must place in Him. Since God is sovereign, we can understand that the presence of intrinsic evil on Earth serves a divine purpose. Indeed, by grasping this lesson, we can perceive (or infer) that the main purpose of intrinsic evil is to foster and stimulate faith in the **"Heavenly Father"**. Awareness of **"evil"** on Earth can lead to three types of human reactions. The first reaction is conscious confrontation: the so-called "spiritual battle." Some people attribute all evil to the presence of malevolent forces intent on harming humanity, and they focus their efforts on this battle (which Jesus authorized on several occasions). Others simply close their eyes and deliberately try not to see the **"evil"**, living their lives distracted by various daily activities. Still others—those to whom Jesus refers in this passage—amplify the **"evil"** through their anxiety and lack of faith in the **"Heavenly Father",** thereby multiplying its impact on their lives. When teaching His disciples to pray (in verse 13), Jesus teaches us to ask God to **"deliver us from evil"**, showing us that the ideal attitude is neither intentional disregard nor pragmatic confrontation, but **conscious faith** in the **"Heavenly Father"** as the sovereign Lord who has the power to **"deliver us from evil"** according to **"His will."**

THE TIME IS FULFILLED

"Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying: **The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel."** Mark 1:14-15

Our earthly existence is ordered by at least two specific time periods. The first phase is childhood (with its various stages, including adolescence), characterized by dependence on parents or other responsible individuals. The second phase is maturity, characterized by relative autonomy and responsibility. Jesus also distinguishes at least two phases in the history of man (or humanity): the first phase culminates with the arrival of Jesus, and the second phase, marked by repentance and belief in the Gospel, is characterized by the arrival of the Kingdom of God.

The Hebrew people lived in this first era of humanity under the paternalistic guidance of God, who, when not actively manifesting himself by parting the sea or sending manna, spoke through leaders and prophets whom he himself chose and guided. In the first phase of humanity, as with a child, God demanded obedience to His Laws and punished those who disobeyed. But as the first time came to an end, God demanded more than that: he demanded active responsibility. The notion of repentance is complex because it involves distinguishing right from wrong and recognizing one's own error. This notion already existed in humanity since the time of Adam and Eve, who recognized their error and were punished. However, Jesus comes to announce in the age of maturity a new possibility where conscious repentance and belief in the Gospel can have a different outcome than punishment, which is the justice of forgiveness. But forgiveness is not free and depends on certain things. This is basically the good news Jesus announced. During his incarnate ministry, Jesus dedicated himself to teaching those who repented the path to the Kingdom of God, the justice of forgiveness, and the responsibility of man in his own salvation.

“If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.” John 15:22.

In preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, Jesus transfers part of the responsibility for salvation to man. The Savior is Jesus, but salvation is not for everyone, only for those who repent, believe in the Gospel, and receive the Kingdom of God—the righteousness of forgiveness.

THE JUSTICE OF FORGIVENESS

Let's open the Bible again and read Jesus' words in Matthew 18:23-35. Here we have Jesus' instructions on forgiveness, along with the parable of the unforgiving servant.

In this parable, Jesus describes: **Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants”**, addressing then precisely the topic at hand: **“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness;**

Jesus starts from the premise that we are somehow indebted to the King. The unmerciful servant owed the King the incredible sum of ten thousand talents (a fortune). He had no way to pay and was about to be sold into slavery, along with his wife and children. He could have rebelled upon hearing the sentence, blasphemed, and insulted the king; however, he adopted a posture of humility and submission: **"The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him,"** and asked only for time to pay the debt. Now, the King knew perfectly well that the servant would never pay his debt (just as we will never pay ours).

Seeing his submissive attitude, and the creditor's recognition of his own insignificance and the monarch's sovereignty, the King did more than give a deadline; he did something the debtor neither asked for nor expected, and **“Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt”.** We can see that Divine justice is completely different from human justice. This is because God is Father, and as Father, He is merciful. If it were not so, there would be no reason for us, imperfect and sinful human beings, to continue existing in the world. Fortunately, we are not judged by human justice, which offers no forgiveness, but by divine mercy. We can also see that the King did not invite the debtor to live in the palace, nor did he give him a banquet. He simply forgave him and sent him away. The debtor submitted to the King's justice. His debt was forgiven. He has not yet gained the kingdom of heaven, but he was left free to his own will. And now?

After being forgiven, the servant encountered his fellow servant, who owed him one hundred denarii. The reaction of the unmerciful creditor was terrible: “He seized him and choked him, saying, **“Pay me that thou owest.”** The fellow servant's words were exactly the same as the debtor’s: **“Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.”** but they received no mercy (it was human justice speaking). Upon learning of what had happened, the king was outraged and changed his mind, handing the unmerciful creditor over to his executioners until, at the cost of his freedom or his life, he paid the debt.

When we talk about forgiveness, we usually think about the forgiveness of sins. But here we are not talking about sins, but about a fortune of ten thousand talents. This fortune represents everything we have, starting with our own lives, our family, our possessions, our talents–in short, everything we have that God has given us. Tudo o que temos, e até a nossa própria existência, devemos a Deus.

Our life is a breath from the Creator, and we cannot simply breathe it back and return life. We will never be able to repay this breath. But God, in his infinite goodness and understanding, forgives this debt to the creditor who recognizes where it comes from.

God forgives our debt but demands something in return. And this something is precisely the forgiveness we receive. If we cannot forgive the hundred denarii that our brother owes us, it is because in our hearts we do not accept the forgiveness of ten thousand talents, granted by the King. If we do not accept forgiveness, it is because we do not recognize our debt to God, or, in other words, we reject God's forgiveness and Sovereignty and are condemned.

Notice then this strong characteristic of God's justice: the link between the forgiveness of the creditor and the forgiveness of the debtor.

If God forgave our debt of ten thousand talents, and if a portion of these ten thousand talents was lent to a third person at the time of forgiveness, then the debt of this third person was also automatically forgiven. We no longer have the right to collect.

God's forgiveness does not guarantee salvation. Salvation depends on our accepting the forgiveness that is granted to us, and the acceptance of this forgiveness begins with the forgiveness we grant to our brothers and sisters.

A word clear enough for everyone, yet Jesus did not fail to emphasize: **"So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."**

Notice that we are not yet talking about repentance, liberation from sins, reward, banquet, or eternal life. We are talking about the existential forgiveness that God grants us even without us asking, forgiveness whose recognition and acceptance are prerequisites for us to remain free to continue our search. If, from within, we do not forgive our brother, we are refuting God's forgiveness and sovereignty, and therefore, we are trapped and unable to follow or receive Jesus.

Read also the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-15.

"...and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors..."

"But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

If we do not forgive our brothers, we are truly in sin. Such a great sin, in fact, that it cannot even be forgiven, since by refusing forgiveness to our brother, we are in turn refusing it to ourselves. How can I ask God to grant me forgiveness for the sin of not forgiving my debtor? It is practically impossible even to formulate such a request. We must therefore repent of this path and turn back.

To summarize in one word, we can say that God's justice is Forgiveness.

Human justice (supposedly) is impartial. God's justice is partial.

To be partial means to take sides in favor of someone.

God does not want us to be impartial, but completely partial toward our neighbor. The side to be taken should be that of our neighbor, and not our own, even if impartial justice speaks in our favor.

By accepting and practicing forgiveness, and by taking the side of our neighbor, we are practicing God's justice and upholding His kingdom; and if we want His kingdom and His justice for ourselves, we must first uphold this kingdom and this justice toward our brother.

THY SINS ARE FORGIVEN

The two dimensions of Jesus' ministry

Read Luke 7:36 to 8:3

Many 21st-century Christians often refer to the scholars of Mosaic Law from Jesus' time, the so-called "Pharisees," as prejudiced men who persecuted Jesus and publicly tested Him, confronting Him and tempting Him with tricky questions in order to make Him contradict Himself. Some were indeed like that, especially the theologians living in Jerusalem who considered themselves guardians of the Law.

Nowadays, it's even common to call a Christian who prefers to keep the Mosaic Law, defending theological paradigms, rather than living the Christianity of the Gospel, a "Pharisee." But until shortly before Jesus' ministry began, the Pharisees were respectable people, respected and adhering to the official theological interpretation provided by Torah scholars. If we want to draw an analogy with modern times, we could even say that they correspond to the elders who serve in Christian churches today. But Jesus came to bring to the world a vision of spirituality far greater than what was understood and agreed upon within the limits of the theological concepts of the time.

Jesus came to expand these concepts, breaking established paradigms. Therefore, these reactions from the Pharisees were natural and even expected; perplexed, they observed Jesus' deeds and teachings going beyond the concepts established by officially recognized theology. Simon was a respectful but suspicious Pharisee. When Jesus visited his community, he naturally invited Him to eat at his house, but he did not dare to offer Him the small honors of hospitality usually reserved for important guests.

But He also did not confront Him publicly when the woman, thus called a "sinner," washed and kissed His feet and anointed His hair. Instead, Simon questioned himself inwardly about this strange Master who broke paradigms, wondering if he was truly a prophet. Jesus, however, merciful and knowing his reasoning, also did not confront him directly in front of everyone; although Luke openly exposes Simon's thoughts in his narrative, Jesus did not. With a discreet, simple comparison, Jesus speaks of the two debtors and contrasts Simon's attitude with that of the woman who cared for His comfort after a laborious journey on foot along dirt roads. Jesus concludes His lesson by breaking yet another paradigm and publicly forgives the "sinful" woman, demonstrating a new dimension of His spirituality, which is the dimension of the forgiveness of sins.

This Divine dimension of Jesus, which is His authority to forgive sins, was completely unknown to the Jews, and even to Jesus' own followers at the time. Even the woman who wept at Jesus' feet had no idea of this capacity of the Redeemer. She was probably weeping in gratitude for the fact that Jesus had changed her life after casting out demons, healing an illness, or perhaps resurrecting a loved one. This was the Messianic dimension by which Jesus was known at the time, including by this woman. But even after being blessed by Jesus' mercy, it seemed to her that something was missing, and she, weeping, went to kiss His feet. Then Jesus surprised her once again, and surprised everyone, by forgiving her sins; and then He sent her away in His Peace. Even today we can observe in the world the dichotomy of the two debtors in the Christian world.

There are Christians who consider themselves great debtors, who perfectly understand the dimension of the forgiveness of their sins and love Jesus so much that they carry this dimension of His ministry on their banners, proclaiming Him to the world as Redeemer. But there are Christians who consider themselves small debtors who, despite following Christ, do not have intimacy with this dimension of His Ministry and proclaim Him through the Messianic dimension of His teachings, His Wisdom, or His authority over the flesh and the spiritual world. But in the parable of the two creditors, Jesus gives hope to Simon, because after all, both debtors are forgiven. I can then even imagine, many years after the ascension, Simon, a Pharisee converted by the power of Jesus' own Word, recounting to the young physician-historian the most magnificent day of his life: the day Jesus came to dine at his house. Ah!... Simon, if you had realized the power of Jesus' Word transforming your life, as He transformed this woman's life, you too would be at His feet, weeping with gratitude and worshiping your Master and Savior!

THE PEACE OF FORGIVENESS

When they came to the place called Calvary, they crucified him there, along with the criminals, one on his right and the other on his left. But Jesus said, **“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do”.** And they parted his raiment, and cast lots”. Luke 23: 33-34

“Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, **Peace be unto you**. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, **Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.** And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, **Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.** John 20: 19-23.

Traditionally, different Christian theological lines have focused on interpreting this passage from John as the transmission to the apostles (and consequently to their successors) of the Divine authority to forgive and retain the sins of others committed against God's Law. After all, Jesus affirmed that He had the power to forgive sins, as in the episode of the paralytic on the roof in Capernaum (Matthew 9:1-6; Mark 2:1-12 and Luke 5:17-26) or in the case of the woman who anointed His feet (Luke 7:36-50).

Some churches have structured confessional formulas, penances, pilgrimages, rites, and even the sale of indulgences based on the supposed authority to forgive and retain sins. But is that really the case? Does the minister of the Word also have full authority to generically forgive or retain the sins of others that do not concern him? Wasn't Jesus, instead, referring to the story of the unmerciful creditor who lost the king's forgiveness by not forgiving his debtor (Matthew 18:23-35)? Wasn't He referring to the evangelist's need to forgive his own persecutors (who would be many) as a prerequisite for the mission entrusted to them? Before breathing the Holy Spirit upon them and sending them, Jesus emphasized twice that He left His Peace for them.

Jesus forgave his persecutors on the cross, and how could it not be the same for the evangelists

who were sent in the same Spirit with which the Father sent His Messiah? Analyzing the context of the situation, we realize that this contact of Jesus, behind closed doors, with his disciples had a well-defined purpose: to send them on their missions, inspired by the Holy Spirit. Now, we know that this mission is to preach the Word and not simply to forgive or retain sins. It would be inconsistent to think that Jesus would attribute to his disciples the authority to retain the sins of others when He himself forgave his persecutors on the cross.

Wouldn't it be more coherent to conclude that Jesus was recommending to the apostles that they forgive their own offenders as a prerequisite for having peace and following their ministry in the same way as the Master? Wouldn't it be more coherent to conclude that Jesus was recommending to the apostles that they not hold onto the offenses of their enemies in their own hearts? After all, how could they have peace while dwelling on the offenses of their persecutors? How could they harbor the Holy Spirit while cultivating hatred in their hearts? How could they continue teaching forgiveness without first forgiving their offenders?

The main lesson given on the cross is forgiveness. If the evangelist does not forgive his offender, he himself will be retaining sin in his heart, which, by generating hatred and resentment, would also prevent him from continuing his ministry. Nothing brings more peace to the heart than forgiveness. Preaching the Word of Jesus is, above all, preaching the Gospel of forgiveness. Forgiveness is the Good News. Without forgiveness there is no love. Without forgiveness there is no peace. Without forgiveness there is no salvation. The preacher of the Word of Jesus must, above all, practice full forgiveness in his own heart, at the risk of being inconsistent in his ministry. If the minister of the Word does not forgive, he will be retaining the sin of the other in his own heart and nullifying himself as a servant of the Lord.

Well, I'll tell you a secret: Jesus' Word isn't clearly understandable to everyone. This particular word was given immediately after Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit upon His disciples. Now, as far as we know, a true understanding of the Word is only given by the Holy Spirit. When one doesn't have the Holy Spirit, understanding of the Word isn't granted, and the message's focus is distorted by a hardened heart. We are therefore certain that the disciples understood the true meaning of this message. But would all the religious authorities who fomented the crusades, the inquisitions, religious intolerance, and the atrocities committed in the name of the one who taught forgiveness while hanging on a cross have understood it? Would those who used the confessional as a dubious source of information to increase their social and political power have understood it? Would those whose greed used the belief in the supposed personal authority to retain and forgive sins as a source of monetary income through the sale of indulgences have understood it?

Anyone who fails to understand that forgiveness is Jesus' main message and that peace and love are its corollaries will never grasp the essence of the Good News and will continue living a life of sin, even if confined within a monastery, even if deluded by the supposed power to forgive or retain the sins of others.

HE THAT IS WITHOUT SIN AMONG YOU, LET HIM FIRST CAST A STONE AT HER

Read John 8:1-11.

The woman had been caught in adultery. A flagrant act witnessed. There was a relentless law written by Moses (Deuteronomy 22:22-24) that mandated stoning to death. The judgment was seemingly clear. Law violated, punishment prescribed. Human justice is synonymous with death. What is God's justice like? **“He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her”.**

Jesus here once again presents this powerful characteristic of God's justice that distinguishes it from the justice of men: the link between the condemnation of the accused and the condemnation of the judge.

Just as forgiveness was withdrawn from the unmerciful creditor, the execution of the adulterous woman depended on a sinless executioner.

“He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her”

Everyone withdrew, beginning with the oldest (perhaps those who had the most sins). No one condemned the woman, not even Jesus. Once judged guilty, she was not condemned even by the Son of God. Note that Jesus did not forgive the woman. He simply did not condemn her. She, in turn, did not ask for forgiveness, since she had not been condemned. Had she herself recognized her sin and repented, asking God for forgiveness, she would have been forgiven, but this is a situation that was not being considered.

“Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.”

Has someone committed adultery?
Do you know someone who has had an affair?
Has that certain divorced person converted and wants to join the church?
Have you cut ties with the young woman who became a single mother?
Do you enjoy throwing stones?
Do you want to be the first to throw the stone?
If Jesus didn't condemn, who are we to condemn?
If someone sins, it's because they don't know Jesus.
If your brother is an adulterer, you can be sure he doesn't truly know the Word of Jesus.

Jesus does not condemn anyone for this, but he does not condone sin. **“go, and sin no more.”**

Those who sin are indebted to God, not to their brothers and sisters. And between God and the sinner, there is only one person: Jesus.
Do you want to stand between the sinner and God?
How about telling God about the "dirty secrets" of everyone you know?
Do you want to take God's place on the throne of Justice?
How about deciding for God what the condemnation of these sinners should be?
Do you want to exchange the Word of Jesus for your own?
What is your Word?
Beware! If you want to, this can happen. To you!

I JUDGE NO MAN

Read now in John 8:12-20.

“Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man. And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me”.

Man's nature is the nature of the flesh.
Man's judgment is made according to the flesh.
Jesus, as the Son of Man, did not judge anyone. He only judged in communion with the Father, in order to fulfill his purpose on earth.
If Jesus did not judge, who are we to judge?
If Jesus did not condemn, who are we to condemn?
He who judges according to the flesh is in darkness. He who sees according to the flesh is in darkness. It would be better to close our eyes and remain in the light.

THE SABBATH WAS MADE FOR MAN, AND NOT MAN FOR THE SABBATH

Read Mark now, chapter 2, verses 23 to 28, and chapter 3, verses 1 to 6.

One of Jesus' greatest controversies with the Pharisees concerned the essentially legalistic character with which they imbued the law of Moses.
This legalistic character manages to produce in man an excessively artificial relationship with God. Thus, the Lord becomes a cold, distant, inflexible, and calculating judge; not at all like the figure of the Father, concerned with the well-being of His children, as Jesus so often emphasized.
Have you ever stopped to think about the reasons why God established the Law given through Moses? Read the Decalogue in Exodus chapter 20. Meditate on God's reasons. Start with the fourth commandment.

“The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath”.

The fourth commandment was clearly established to improve the quality of human life on earth. Jesus recognizes this. It's easy to imagine how difficult life would be for humankind without a day of the week to rest and dedicate to God. Rest assured that God will not suffer in the slightest if you fail to keep the Sabbath. Only you will suffer.

But what about the other commandments?

What about the fifth commandment: **“Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee”.** If we meditate a little, we will also come to the conclusion that if we fulfill this commandment, our life on earth will be better.

Meditate a little more on each commandment and you too will come to the conclusion that obedience to them directly results in an improvement in the quality of life for humankind on earth.

Surely you will live better if you don't kill anyone.

If you don't steal, your life will be much richer than if you commit theft.

If you don't commit adultery, your life will be much more truthful than if you indulge in this practice. And so on.

All the commandments and laws were established to improve man's life. When man disobeys them, he immediately begins to suffer the consequences of his bad choice.

And besides suffering the consequences of his bad choice, he is also subject to being judged and punished for his disobedience.

Let's take a classic case: Adam and Eve in Genesis chapter 3.

Eve was punished with the pains of childbirth and subservience to her husband.

Adam was punished with the need to work the land to earn his living. Both were expelled from paradise.

But few people are aware of the greatest punishment Adam and Eve received for eating the forbidden fruit: the very knowledge of good and evil. This was the worst consequence, and one that God was precisely trying to avoid through the only law He had given to man. The other punishments were for disobedience.

The Law of Moses has the same objective: to prevent man from doing evil against himself. The Law of Moses therefore serves as a standard of conduct for man, and as a standard of judgment for God.

But the Pharisees, instead of observing the law in their behavior, began to use it to judge their fellow man (and note the total inversion of values), they used it to judge Jesus, and we could also say that they used it to judge God himself.

“The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath”.

A law of God interpreted and transformed into the law of men. Divine justice confronting the justice of men. A law made to improve human life, but which, transformed by the hardness of hearts, forbade Jesus from healing on the Sabbath. Complete substitution of divine values for human values. The Law given by God as a manifestation of love to improve human life, being used by man to judge God and his neighbor. Meditate on this: How do you use God's Law?

JUDGE NOT ACCORDING TO THE APPEARANCE

Read John chapter 7, verses 14 to 24 below.

Original sin (described in Genesis chapter 3, verses 1 to 24) has much to do with man's pretension, having knowledge of good and evil, to make himself the judge of his own life and the lives of others. Judging is a prerogative of God. Being imperfect, man judges only by appearances, committing injustices. It is best to leave this task to God, and not judge, or if judgment is unavoidable. **“Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.”**

But who is capable of judging with righteous justice? Jesus gives us the formula. **“He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.”** Judgment belongs to God, and it is executed through the Word of Jesus. In it, there is no injustice.

When man judges by appearances, he is generally seeking his own glory, and the benchmark used is man himself. We must bear in mind, however, that in judging creation, we are also judging the Creator himself. To judge with righteous justice means to use God's standard for judgment. When, in judging our neighbor (creation), we seek God's glory, and not His depreciation, then we will not have injustice within ourselves. It was God who created the one being judged, and therefore, in any judgment that man makes, he will be placing God's glory under evaluation. To judge with righteous justice is to judge seeking God's glory.

Leia John 5. 19 a 47.

“I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me. If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true”.

THE LIGHT OF THE BODY IS THE EYE

“The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!” Matthew 6.22 e 23.

How do you see your brother?
How do you see the people God has placed around you?
How do you see the world you live in, the world God created?
Do you see it with light? Do you see it with darkness?
Whoever sees and analyzes is judging.
How do you judge? With light or with darkness?
Have you noticed that the flaws we most easily see in others are our own flaws?
Whoever judges their neighbor is judging themselves.
Whoever condemns their neighbor is condemning themselves.
Whoever forgives their neighbor is forgiving themselves.
Whoever gives to their neighbor is giving to themselves.
The measure is the same.

WITH THE SAME MEASURE

Now open to Luke chapter 6, verses 36 to 38.

“Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.”

God, in His mercy, gives the sinner three chances. The first chance is not to judge, and to leave this prerogative to God. We then free ourselves from an immense burden, and even escape being judged. When we judge someone, we are actually judging ourselves, **“For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.”** if we do not judge, we will not be judged either.

The sinner's second chance (once judged) is not to condemn. As in the case of the adulterous woman. The sin was clear. But what good would condemnation do? So if judgment was inevitable, judge with righteous justice, and do not condemn. Look with eyes of light, and not with eyes of darkness.

The third chance is to forgive (once you have judged and condemned). It is your last chance. Remember the unforgiving creditor. If you need to forgive someone, it's because you have already committed two sins (judged and condemned). Don't give the evil one any leeway. Forgive and free yourself from this burden. And if you feel you haven't forgotten enough, then do the following: "**give**", help a little more to those who owe you. Give a little more. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, and generous, for that is how the kingdom of God is.

FIRST BE RECONCILED TO THY BROTHER

Now continue reading Matthew, chapter 5, verses 21 to 26.
Also read Genesis 4:1-16.

The commandment **“Thou shalt not kill”** (Exodus 20:13) was and is not new to anyone. Even human justice usually punishes homicide with the most severe penalties. But homicide, whose source is hatred or lack of love, is the result of a series of factors, such as circumstances, opportunity, the audacity to commit the act, the possibility of impunity under human law, and the emotional loss of control at the moment. Many homicides have been prevented from being committed due to lack of opportunity, fear of human laws, lack of audacity, or a suitable instrument; although the triggering source was strongly present within. For God, what matters is what is happening in the heart of man.

Whoever kills is judging, condemning, and executing. Without forgiveness. At the very least, they are subject to judgment. Jesus doesn't say whether they will be condemned or forgiven. The last word belongs to God. The source of this sin is hatred, or lack of love. Ultimately, this is what is subject to judgment. Whoever loves does not judge, or if they judge, they use righteous justice through the prism of Jesus. If someone is angry without reason (is there really a reason?), they are judging, and therefore subject to judgment. Whoever insults their brother is judging, condemning, and failing to forgive. They will be subject to judgment and even "**in danger of hell fire**" if they are not forgiven. When we submit to God's justice, we cannot expect absolution. We are guilty, debtors, imperfect, flawed, human, carnal, and sinful. Absolution is only for the innocent. Forgiveness is the only hope for us sinners.

It is at God's altar that we ask for forgiveness for our sins. But how can we ask for His forgiveness if we are in conflict with our brother?

Jesus teaches us that this is incompatible. And once again, He hits the same point: As long as we have hatred in our hearts, we are indebted to God and beyond the reach of His forgiveness. Remember the Word that God Himself spoke to Cain before he killed Abel: "**If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.**

TAKE HEED TO YOURSELVES

"Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest:" Deuteronomy 12:13

Next, open to Luke, chapter 17, verses 3-10.

If your brother has sinned against you, Jesus' first word in response is: **"Take heed to yourselves"**.

"**Take heed to yourselves**" is an exhortation meaning to exercise self-awareness. It serves as a warning against sin, preaching vigilance against temptations.

In this passage, Jesus is not talking about debts, but about sin. Not only about our own sin, but the sin of our brother against us.

Jesus makes it very clear here that believers don't need to be permissive. They don't need to let their brother's sin go unpunished. "**Rebuke him.**" In other words, warning him about his sin, help him not to sin, lead him to repentance. If you see your brother fall, help him to get up. Your goal is for him to repent, that is, to be able to receive forgiveness. Under these conditions, **"if he repents, forgive him".**

This is the initial step towards achieving the freedom to follow Jesus. We will not be saved by this but only freed from our existential debt. It seems like a lot, doesn't it? But it's not much. If we forgive the offenses of our brothers inwardly, then we can say, "We are useless servants, because we only did what we ought to have done." But if we don't do this, we will not be able to continue. If you are finding this difficult, join the chorus of the Apostles and pray: "Lord, increase our faith."

This is the initial step towards achieving the freedom to follow Jesus. We will not be saved by this, but only freed from our existential debt. It seems like a lot, doesn't it? But it's not much. If we forgive the offenses of our brothers in our hearts, then we can say: **"We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." "**. However, if we don't do this, we won't be able to move forward. If you are finding it difficult, join the chorus of the Apostles and pray: **"Lord, increase our faith"**.

Read also Matthew 18:15-22.

But let us keep the Word: **"Take heed to yourselves".**

Jesus did not teach to rebuke every creature that sins against you, but only "**to thy brother.**" Wisdom dwells with prudence, and let us remember the Word of God in Proverbs:

"He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame: and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot. Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning." Proverbs 9: 7 a 9.

Reproving a brother in sin has a purpose: "**every word may be established.**" We cannot always achieve this alone, requiring the help of other brothers who are firm in faith, or even the help of the Church. The goal is to "win back the brother" who was lost in sin. But if, even after being rebuked by the Church, the brother prefers sin, then he cannot remain in the Body of Christ and should be "**loosed**" (not condemned or executed). To consider someone as a **"heathen man and a publican**" means not valuing their worth, because otherwise the Word of sin would be permeating and contaminating the Body of Christ. This does not mean that we should stop loving them and continue to bring them the Word of God (as if they were a **"heathen man and a publican"**), because if they are in sin they must be converted, and if this happens, they can be reconnected to the Body of Christ.

BY THY WORDS THOU SHALT BE CONDEMNED

Now continue reading Matthew 12:33-37.

Whoever does not have true love in their heart is prone to judging their neighbor.

Whoever insults or simply uses a frivolous word, besides judging, is condemning without forgiveness. They are subject to judgment and condemnation. They are a bad tree that bears bad fruit. Note in this passage that, for Jesus, a simple word is a fruit by which the tree is judged. We will see in other passages that Jesus refers to fruits several times. Fruits can range from concrete acts to simple words. In general, human beings do not value words much and have the habit of uttering them without thinking. For Jesus, words are elements of vital importance for the constitution of the kingdom of God.

The Word of Jesus is the means by which man can accept the sacrifice of the cross and be saved.

The Word of man is the means by which man testifies about what is in his heart.

"But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

OUT OF THE ABUNDANCE OF THE HEART THE MOUTH SPEAKETH

Next, meditate on Matthew 12:22-37 and Matthew 15:1-20.

"But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man."

Words are truly important, insofar as they bear witness to what is in the heart. If a person is mute, or hypocritical enough to say what they do not feel, they will not escape the consequences of their sin, but not all people bother to restrain their tongues. The vast majority of people speak what they think or feel and thus end up contaminating themselves and others with the iniquity of their own judgment.

How are the inner workings of your heart?

What do you allow to be present within you?

Evil intentions? Murders? Adultery? Prostitution? Thefts? False testimony? Blasphemies?

Have you ever taken stock of what is present in your heart?

Have you ever done a good cleaning of your heart?

CLEANSE FIRST THAT WHICH IS WITHIN THE CUP AND PLATTER

Now continue reading Matthew, chapter 23:13-36.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also."

By using the comparison of the **"the cup and of the platter"** Jesus teaches us how evil enters our inner selves.

Whoever lives judging the (apparently) sin of others is **feeding** on sin.

Whoever **feeds on sin** (even if it is apparently someone else's) is cultivating sin in their heart and, therefore, is in the process of dying. Whoever feeds on sin speaks the Word of sin, for a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Whoever has sin as their Word distills death on their tongue.

"Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

The viper (who has death on his tongue) thinks he is condemning his neighbor. In truth, he is condemning himself, for he who condemns is condemned. How to escape hell? Jesus teaches us: **"cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter."** It is possible to cleanse the heart! We can do this through the Word of Jesus. Indeed, this is the first thing we must do: clean the inside of the cup first, and then the outside will be clean.

AS THE FATHER SAID UNTO ME, SO I SPEAK

Now proceed with John 5:19-30 and John 12:44-50.

"For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him."
"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise."
"And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak."

The Father judges no one. Jesus judges no one either. It is the Word itself, spoken by Jesus and prescribed by the Father, that judges. Note that the Word is not merely a discourse, a message, or a teaching. The Word is a third person; it is alive, and it has the force of Law. More than the force of Law, the Word has the force of Judge, for it is the Word that judges. And the Word of Jesus judges the Word of man.

"**as I hear, I judge"**
"...for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

What has been your word?
What comments have you made about your neighbor?
What do you have to say?
What is your message?
What judgment and condemnation have you pronounced upon yourself, thinking you were referring to another person?

Have you forgiven yourself lately through forgiving others?
Loving your neighbor as yourself is not just a beautiful rule of conduct. It is a fundamental truth. As you love your neighbor, you are loving yourself. What you prescribe for others, you are also prescribing for yourself.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." John 5:24

REPENT YE: FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND.

Concluding our study on the justice of God, we will begin our study on the kingdom of God. But before addressing the kingdom of God, preparation and a correction of our ways are necessary. Read Matthew 3:1-12 now, followed by Matthew 4:12-17.

When sent to prepare the way of the Lord, John the Baptist preached baptism for repentance of sins.

When Jesus learned that John the Baptist had been arrested, he returned to Galilee and, before beginning his own ministry, made John's Word his own, preparing the disciples for the teachings that would follow.

“Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Repentance from sins is a prerequisite for forgiveness and for the action of God's Word in man. Repentance from sins is the gateway to the kingdom of God.

Let us now read Luke 13:1-5.

“except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

In this short passage, narrated only by Luke, the disciples recount in horror the atrocities committed by Pilate against some Galileans.

The disciples were scandalized by the physical death imposed by human cruelty, just as they had already been scandalized by the "accidental" death of eighteen people buried in the collapse of the Tower of Siloam.

Do not be scandalized by physical death. Physical death is part of human nature. Worry instead about spiritual death. Acknowledge yourself as a sinner and repent of your sins, or your destiny will be no different from those who died prematurely without having repented. Without repentance, the certain destiny is death. Repentance of sins is the key to forgiveness, on which eternal life depends.

Let us now read Luke 5:27-32.

“I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

When the Pharisees and scribes (teachers of Jewish law) saw Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners, they were indignant. Perhaps even jealous. They might have said:

“Teacher! Eating with sinners! What a scandal! Leave them! Eat with us! We are righteous! We are not sinners!”

Were they not sinners?

Who is not a sinner?

We are all sinners. But we don't always recognize it.

Jesus is not interested in honoring those who consider themselves righteous for this or that reason. I could even have said to them:

“You are not sinners? Well, you don't need me. Your righteousness is enough for you. They will be judged by their merits.”

Who doesn't need Jesus? Who can do without His salvation?

Who is so good that they will be saved by their own virtues and merits?

The verb conjugated here is “to call.” Those who consider themselves righteous are not called.

Sinners are called. Not everyone will be chosen, but the prerequisite for being called is recognizing sin. Those who do not recognize themselves as sinners are not called, much less chosen. And just as the prerequisite for being called is recognizing sin, the prerequisite for being chosen is repenting of sin.

Read also in Luke 18:9-14 the parable for those who trust in themselves because they consider themselves righteous.

“...for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

Humbling ourselves and acknowledging ourselves as sinners is the first step we take toward Jesus. The second is repentance for sins.

Those who consider themselves righteous trust in themselves. They do not depend on God's forgiveness or Jesus' Sacrifice on the Cross.

Those who do not recognize themselves as sinners are not humble in spirit. They do not repent and do not accept forgiveness.

Those who recognize themselves as sinners but do not repent of their sin will also not benefit from forgiveness.

Those who claim to be repentant and then sin again were not truly repentant and therefore were not even forgiven. True repentance implies a real willingness not to sin again. One synonym for repentance is "giving up."

But simply recognizing oneself as a sinner and repenting is not enough.

THE LOST SHEEP

“I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments.” Psalms 119:176.

“He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.” Isaiah 40.11.

“And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord GOD”. Ezequiel 34. 31.

The image of the shepherd leading the flock was not new to the Jews. These three important texts from the Old Testament finish similarly, comparing men to sheep and placing the Lord as the shepherd.

If we delve deeper into this comparison, we will see that it is not very flattering. Sheep are not beings that excel in intelligence and generally assume group behavior. In the same way, the worldly man views those brothers who blindly follow a leader without questioning him in a rather pejorative way, labeling them as "fanatics." But when we compare man to God, we cannot fail to give reason to this comparison; after all, what is man before God? Perhaps not a sheep, but a simple and microscopic bacterium of ephemeral life. But the fact is that Jesus in his ministry takes up this comparison and wonderfully deepens it for our understanding.

Now read Luke 15:1-10.

“I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.”

Forgiveness for our existential debt has already been granted to us. Without sacrifices, without us asking, without the need for repentance. We only need to accept it, and we do this by recognizing it and extending it to our brother.

Forgiveness for sin is a little different.

Focusing on the parable of the lost sheep, the message that sin is everything that separates us from God becomes clear.

Jesus compared the lost sheep to the sinner. The sinner is, therefore, the one who distances himself from God and His flock (in this case, the Church).

Have you ever looked for a sheep in the desert?

I've never done that, but I believe that if the sheep doesn't want to be found and stays quiet, lying behind a pile of sand, I'll hardly find it.

If the sheep decides to return to the flock, it will have to "repent" of its escape and begin to bleat, very loudly, so that the shepherd finds it before the wild beasts.

But to bleat loudly, the sheep needs to have the hope of being found (trust that its shepherd is looking for it), because the risk of bleating loudly in the desert is being found by predators.

In the same way, the sinner, to be forgiven, needs to repent, have faith, and pray to God, so that He may have mercy on him and save him from his own perdition.

The prerequisites for the forgiveness of sins are the recognition of one's sinful state (perdition) and repentance (the intention to return to the fold). But salvation does not depend solely on the sheep, as it requires an effort from the shepherd, who gives up his rest and goes out into the desert searching for it (Calvary). The metaphor is exactly this: the lost sheep (sinner), repentant for straying from the shepherd (suffering the consequences of sin), needs to trust (have faith), and bleat (pray), so that the shepherd (Jesus) will save it from perdition.

Sin (separation from God) has a high price, which is the sacrifice of Jesus.

Our sin cost the blood of Jesus. Is that so difficult to conceive?

I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Read Psalm 23.

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.”

The image of the shepherd leading the flock of sheep is very significant to the Israelites.

Sheep are not animals that excel in intelligence. They get lost easily. They don't know how to defend themselves from predators. They can't even run to escape large carnivores. If they weren't guarded by God and men, they would probably be an endangered species.

Comparing oneself to a sheep is a sign of humility.

Having God as a shepherd is a sign of recognition and submission to His sovereign will.

But having confidence in this shepherd and having faith that nothing will be lacking (even while walking through the valley of the shadow of death) is the great challenge for any sheep.

Read John 10.1 a 18.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out."

Some people dislike being led by others.

Generally, they are people of principle, character, and keen discernment. They were not created to be sheep. Instead, they prefer to discern and seek their own path.

This is a very positive attitude. It is better to walk with little or no vision than to have a blind person or someone with a lock in their eye as a guide.

But before God, man is only a sheep.

To reach God, man needs the Shepherd.

The question then is not whether to have a shepherd, but to know who the Shepherd is!

Who is the good Shepherd? How to recognize Him?

"And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

The key to Jesus is His Word.

The key to recognizing Jesus is hearing His voice (Word).

Jesus knows His sheep and calls them by name. The sheep follow Him because they recognize His voice (Word). His sheep do not know the voice of strangers.

Do not listen to thieves and robbers. They do not have the Word of Jesus.

"I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

It's not always easy to enter through the door, but it's not difficult to identify it. Just follow the Word of Jesus. Whoever keeps it in their heart recognizes it easily, enters through it, is saved, and finds pasture.

Learn to be a sheep that knows the voice of its Shepherd. Observe here the spiritual meaning of the words Jesus used.

The sheep are believers.

The voice is the Word of Jesus.

The door is Jesus himself.

The doorkeeper is the Holy Spirit.

The one who enters through the door is the minister of the Word, the one who keeps and teaches the Word of Jesus.

The thief is the one who wants to take the sheep but does not keep His Word, the false prophet.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD GIVETH HIS LIFE FOR THE SHEEP

Read John 10:1-18.

"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."

The great difference between Jesus and the mercenaries is that Jesus gives his own life for the sheep. By doing this, Jesus also grants life to his sheep. Eternal and abundant life.

No false prophet will ever do that. Jesus has already shed his blood for us. Jesus has already granted eternal life to those who truly believe and keep His Word.

Jesus is alive, and **His Word is alive**. Jesus is alive and dwells in the hearts of those who keep His Word. This is His promise. Just believe in him.

WHAT REASON YE IN YOUR HEARTS?
THY SINS ARE FORGIVEN THEE

Read Luke 5:17-26.

“What reason ye in your hearts?”

When Jesus said he had the authority to forgive sins, the scribes and Pharisees doubted. This doubt was understandable to a certain extent. The Pharisees were versed in the Law of Moses, and according to the Law, up to that point, it was God who forgave sins. But Jesus did not come to put a new patch on an old garment, and although no one questioned him, he knew the thoughts of those around him. He then gave them conclusive proof that he truly had the authority to forgive sins. Everyone was astonished and gave glory to God.

“What reason ye in your hearts?”

Do you have any doubts about Jesus' authority to forgive sins?

Or do you think that simply recognizing yourself as a sinner and repenting is enough?

The lost sheep doesn't know how to return to the fold on its own.

Jesus' intervention is essential for the forgiveness of sin. Only through his sacrifice are we redeemed.

We need to cry out to Jesus and surrender ourselves to Him to return to the fold.

We won't get there by our own steps. But Jesus can take us.

Surrendering to Jesus is essential so that we may be carried by Him, on His shoulders, back to the kingdom of God.

“What reason ye in your hearts?”

A word addressed to those who doubted it, but which, if kept in the heart, has enormous power to drive away evil and invoke the presence of the Holy Spirit.

“What reason ye in your hearts?”

Remember this word and use it all the time. At work, when facing problems. At home during difficult moments with family. In the chaotic traffic of our days. In conversations with people. In idle hours. In the plots woven by television programs. In the problems we encounter in the Church. Always, always, and always ask yourself these two questions that Jesus left us: **“What seek ye?” “What reason ye in your hearts?”** Allow Jesus to be constantly present in your life, talking to you and asking you these questions. See the transformation they will make in you. Remember these words. They are not difficult.

Open your Bible now to Luke 23:39-43.

“And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

God's justice is completely **partial**.

After a life of crime, this evildoer was captured and sentenced to death on the cross. We don't know what his crimes were, but they were probably terrible.

His voice, however, was the only one to rise on Calvary to defend Jesus.

In addition to defending Jesus, he also recognized Him as God.

In addition to defending Jesus and recognizing Him as God, he also realized that Jesus took upon Himself "the same sentence" as the worst of men, precisely to pay, with His life, the price for humanity's sin.

In addition to defending Jesus, recognizing Him as God, realizing that He took upon Himself the sentence of humanity, he also repented of his sins, for he was aware that he was receiving the punishment that his actions deserved.

In addition to defending Jesus, recognizing Him as God, realizing that He took upon Himself the sentence of humanity, and repenting of his sins, he also understood that Jesus was holy, the "**Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world**"; a lamb that had done no wrong, but that was being sacrificed for the remission of the sins of the world and consequently of his own sins.

In addition to defending Jesus, recognizing Him as God, realizing that He took upon Himself the sentence of humanity, repenting of his sins, understanding that this sacrifice freed him from sin before the Lord, the evildoer asked Jesus to remember him when He came in His kingdom. Surely, he had kept His prophetic Word in his heart.

As a result, the wrongdoer gained paradise.

No man has ever spoken so many truths, with so few words, and at a more opportune time.

At first glance, this profession of faith by the wrongdoer on Calvary seems extremely simple. But how many people, often cultured, who study so much, who seek so much, stray along the way and fail to reach these saving conclusions when they really need them most?

God's justice is indeed **partial**, but it has its requirements. The unknown wrongdoer fulfilled them all and gained paradise. It was dramatic. It was radical. Recognize here the justice of God: the justice of the forgiveness of sins through repentance, through faith in Jesus, and in the name of Jesus.

I AM THE WAY

Read John 14:1-15.

“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

Up to now we have studied the prerequisites for Salvation: namely, the recognition of God as Creator and Lord, the recognition of the existential debt we owe Him, the acceptance of the forgiveness of this debt through the forgiveness of our neighbor's debt, the recognition of sin (as damnation), repentance of sin, the practice of God's justice towards our neighbor as a prerequisite for the forgiveness of our sin, and the intervention of Jesus as the shepherd who carries the sheep on his shoulders back to the fold. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Him. But how do we reach Jesus?

“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.” John 6:37-40.

Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, but it is God himself who leads the disciple to walk this path, through the Holy Spirit. It is God who gives the disciple to Jesus. And since this is how the process happens, not even the fact of having come to Jesus is a reason for glory for the believer, since even that was granted to him by God.

Jesus is the way that must be followed. But man cannot walk this path alone. He needs God's help, through the Holy Spirit. But for the Spirit to act in the believer's heart, some doors need to be opened. So how can we get the Spirit to lead us to Jesus?

ASK, AND IT SHALL BE GIVEN YOU

Read Luke 11:5-13.

“And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”

Do you still have doubts in your heart?
Have you not yet accepted Jesus as Lord of your life?
Have you not yet surrendered to Jesus?
Have you not yet felt the illumination of the Holy Spirit?

Are you spiritually hungry?
Do you want bread, a fish, or an egg?
Ask God.
Ask in the name of Jesus, that God may satisfy this hunger.
Ask in the name of Jesus, that God may send you the Holy Spirit.
He will surely do it. It is His promise. Just ask. He is the Father.
To have the companionship of the Holy Spirit, in order to walk the path of truth and life, all we need to do is ask.
Whoever asks recognizes the need, recognizes the Provider, recognizes their own inadequacy, and humbles themselves.
Whoever asks is aware that they will not receive the Holy Ghost through their own merit, but through divine intercession and mercy. Whoever humbles themselves and asks receives. They are then able, with great accompaniment, to continue the journey.

Read now Matthew 7:15-23.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."
"...depart from me, ye that work iniquity.."

Words are important fruits, but they are not enough.
Obedience to God's "**will**" is essential for those who seek the kingdom of heaven.
God is not interested in man having knowledge of good and evil, judging what is right and wrong, and choosing his path according to his own will. This is the original sin of Adam and Eve, for which they were expelled from Eden. Man judges according to the flesh and does not have the capacity to make this type of assessment. When man acts in this way, he ends up getting lost like a stray sheep, entering into sin. What God wants is for us to follow His will, keeping His Word and following His commandments.
Let us then seek to know God's will.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

"**...But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you....**" Matthew 6:33

Are you seeking the kingdom of God?
Do you know what the kingdom of God is?
Have you ever stopped to think about what the "kingdom of God" is?
Most people confuse the **"kingdom of God"** with the **"kingdom of heaven"**. Jesus uses both expressions. Is there a difference?

"And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Matthew 16:18-19.

The **"kingdom of heaven"** is apparently Paradise. Everyone wants to go there. A pleasant place, destined to be the dwelling place of the chosen spirits.
And what is the **"kingdom of God**?
What place can exist that was not created by God?
After all, is God omnipotent or not?
If God is omnipotent and created everything: the heavens, the earth, and hell, then everything that exists belongs to the kingdom of God. Is this logical?

"The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." Luke 17:20-21.

The Word of Jesus is a living Word. It not only informs, but above all transforms. Accepting the transformation induced by the Word is a challenge, but as we are transformed by the Word, we realize that, day by day, it brings us a new message, even if it uses the same vocabulary previously used to convey the first messages.

When Jesus speaks of the **"kingdom of heaven,"** the word **"kingdom"** represents a noun. It indicates a specific place: Paradise. It is a **name.**

When we speak of the "**kingdom of God,**" the word "**kingdom**" derives from the verb: **"to be reigned by the King,"** or **"to be ruled by the King."** Seeking the "**kingdom of God"** means seeking His rule, His direction, His commandments, His "reigning," His "governing." Whoever seeks the "reigning" of God will reach the "kingdom" of heaven. But without the "government" of God, no one reaches the "kingdom" of heaven. Realize the difference.

Let us then learn His commandments, just as they are taught to us in the Word.

Open your Bible now to Matthew 5 and read verses 17-20.

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil".
"Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Jesus came to Earth with the authority of God.
There is a law, announced by the Prophets. Jesus did not come to revoke it, but to fulfill it.
This law is immutable, at least until everything that was prophesied is fulfilled. And despite all speculation and all distortion about this law that has already been fulfilled, it remains the same, unaltered, and is within everyone's reach.

Jesus speaks here of "**commandments."** In this passage, Jesus makes it clear that violating "**one**" commandment (he said one, not two or three), **"one of these least"** is not a sufficiently great reason for a believer to lose their place in Paradise, but **"he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven"** On the other hand, the one who **"do and teach them"** all the commandments "**shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."**

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." John 14.2.

But here again, Jesus imposes the same definitive and essential condition for entering the kingdom of heaven: that the believer practice the righteousness of God and not the righteousness of men. **"For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."**

Let us therefore study the commandments from the perspective of Jesus.
Now, continue reading Matthew 22:34-40.
Mark 12:28-34.
Deuteronomy 6:1-25.
Leviticus 19:18

"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment."

Loving God is the greatest commandment.
Have you ever stopped to think about this?
Of all the things you love, what is God's priority on your list?
What does "loving God" mean?
It seems like an abstract thing, almost meaningless. How can we love someone we don't know? Someone situated on such an infinitely superior plane that we can't even conceive of the kind of existence they lead.
But after all, isn't love a spontaneous feeling? How can we impose it on ourselves by decree of a commandment?
And it's not enough just to love God. It is necessary to love Him with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your understanding, and with all your strength. How can we achieve this?
The Word of Jesus teaches us. Let's look at it:

FOR THE FATHER SEEKETH SUCH TO WORSHIP HIM

Read now, also in John 4:1-30, the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman.

“Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

God is spirit, not body. The body feeds on matter. The spirit "feeds" on love and grace. God does not need matter. Ancient peoples offered sacrifices and burnt offerings to God (a burnt offering was a type of sacrifice offered by the Hebrews, in which the offering was completely consumed by fire). Nowadays, we offer tithes and offerings. God does not need matter. God is a creative power: He creates and destroys whatever He wants according to His will. What matters to God is the spirit with which the offering is made. We cannot "buy" God with money or sacrifices. What God wants from us is our love and our worship. To worship means "to love devoutly or excessively." The Father's love is infinite, but He also wants to be reciprocated. God "seeks" true worshippers, who worship Him in spirit and in truth. Not just liking Him but worshipping Him. Worshipping Him "in spirit" and worshipping Him "in truth." God seeks our love and our worship, and we seek His love and His grace. God appreciates our love and worship, just as we appreciate His love and His grace. The pursuit of affection is bilateral. Just as a father delights in the love and affection of his child, our love and our worship are pleasing to the Creator, and if we have the privilege of bringing pleasure to the Creator, why not do so?

GOD IS A SPIRIT: AND THEY THAT WORSHIP HIM MUST WORSHIP HIM IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH.

To worship in spirit means to worship through the attributes of the spirit, that is, feelings, understanding, soul, and faith. Let us analyze each of them separately.

WITH ALL THY HEART
FEELINGS

Here, when speaking of the heart, Jesus is not referring to the organ that pumps blood located in the chest cavity, but rather to the emotions and feelings inherent in human experience. Through emotions, humans and animals develop feelings such as love, happiness, anger, hatred, sadness, joy, greed, jealousy, pity, despair, anxiety, fear, etc. Emotions can be independent or interrelated entities; some are antagonistic, and others are compatible. It is impossible to feel sadness and joy, or love and hatred, at the same time. We can, however, feel love and joy; fear and anxiety; or anger and despair. In uttering his first commandment, Jesus made it very clear that the first verb to be conjugated by the believer is the verb **“to love”**. He also explained very clearly the intensity and the goal of this love.

“And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.”

Read again Matthew 12:33-37.

“A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.”

Note that Jesus compares the heart (or the feelings of man) to a treasure.

Generally, worldly people don't place much value on the feelings they harbor in their hearts or the words they speak. But God places great importance on what goes on in a person's heart, calling feelings a treasure. The true treasure is love for God. The feeling of love for God is so important that it became Jesus's main commandment and the greatest and truest treasure a person can have. Simple, isn't it? But let's complicate things a little.

Poetically, the seat of emotions is the heart.

Biologically, the seat of emotions is a set of neurological structures at the base of the brain, collectively called the "limbic system."

Humans have a wide variety of emotions, which can be elaborated on by their linguistic structure, but emotions are fundamentally related to two basic nuclei that trigger two basic reactions: pleasure and displeasure (feeling good and feeling bad).

When we talk about "love," we refer to a basic emotion that can be experienced in a unique and different way by each human being.

Even in the same person, this same emotion can be experienced differently in relation to each loved object.

So how exactly do we define "love"?

Biologically, "love" is triggered by an association of events and information that culminate in the release of certain substances (neurotransmitters) in the limbic system (brain structures that regulate emotions), which stimulate the neurological areas of pleasure.

The result is a feeling of "well-being."

In a not-so-poetic way, we can define the verb "to love" psycho-biologically as the ability to "feel good" in the presence of the loved one.

The intensity and way of experiencing love vary from person to person and from situation to situation, but always it is characterized by a common core: "well-being."

This feeling of "well-being" can be rationally elaborated in different ways, such as friendship, passion, compassion, love, adoration, happiness, joy, peace, and altruism. This is man's "good treasure."

Similarly, emotions that culminate in areas of displeasure are experienced as a feeling of "unease," or interpreted as "feeling bad." These are the emotions interpreted as: hatred, anger, envy, jealousy, greed, sadness, anxiety, selfishness, unhappiness. They are man's **"evil treasure."**

Note that Jesus did not define the good man as one who only possesses "good treasure" in his heart, nor did he define the evil man as one who possesses only "evil treasure." All men possess the "knowledge of good and evil" and, therefore, have both good and evil treasure within their hearts. The difference is that the good man offers his good treasure, and the evil man offers his evil treasure.

Feelings sometimes mean nothing to man, who doesn't bother to cultivate them and allows all sorts of weeds to grow in the soil of his heart, but for God, our feelings are classified as **"treasures,"** and through them the Lord also classifies us as "good" and "bad." God knows what He wants, and what He wants is our love. Our "good treasure."

To love God with all your heart means to love Him with all your feelings, leaving no room for emotions that are not rooted in love. Every time we let bad emotions invade the seat of our feelings, we are ceasing to love God and consequently distancing ourselves from Him and walking towards sin.

WITH ALL THY SOUL

“Soul”.

Could you define for a scientist what the soul is?

One of the most frequently used words in the Bible, but also one of the greatest enigmas for humankind.

Perhaps someone might say that the soul is the essence of life. But what is life anyway?

We could never define the word soul in human terms, but through the Word of Jesus we can seek some values that surround the concept of soul.

Read Luke 12: 13-21.

“And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth”.

“But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?”

“A man's life consisteth” in his **“soul”.**

The worldly man is greedy for material wealth. He lives his "life" seeking to accumulate goods and possessions, thereby forgetting God.

But "a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

True "life" is lived in the presence and grace of God.

Do not trade your life with God for material possessions. It is not worth that price.

But let us continue to seek in the Word of God the concepts related to the soul.

Compare Isaiah 42:1 and Matthew 12:18

“Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.”

And in Matthew 26:38

“Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.”

Note that the soul is not exclusive to man. Jesus has a soul. God is also endowed with a soul. If there is **anything in common** between man, Jesus, and God, it is precisely **the soul**. The very formation of man leads us to think that our soul is formed by a small portion of God's soul.

"And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Genesis 2:7

The importance of the soul lies precisely in the fact that it is the "**breath of life,**" the "**breath of the Creator,**" the very "**presence of God**" within us. What price can this have?

Read Mark 8:34 to 9:1

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Jesus teaches us that the soul is the most precious possession a person can have. More valuable than all the riches in the world, it cannot be bought, and yet it can be lost.
What would you do without your soul?
You who live in this **"adulterous and sinful generation,"** who will save your soul?

"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

Jesus is the way of salvation for the sinner's soul.

WITH ALL THY MIND

Before continuing to read, meditate a little and review your definitions:
What is understanding?
What is intelligence?
What is wisdom?

HUMAN DEFINITIONS

Intelligence is an attribute of man. Intelligence is the ability to associate information, leading to the acquisition of concepts and behaviors.
Intelligence is a gift from God. It develops in man through the stimulation of associative neuronal processes. It is essential for survival and for developing tools and technologies that improve the quality of human life. It has an essentially material aspect.
According to dictionaries, wisdom is synonymous with knowledge, erudition, science, or a great accumulation of knowledge.
But these are not Biblical definitions.

"Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute". Luke 11:49.

"The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here" Matthew 12:42. Read the history in 1 Kings 10:1-13.

"Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. Luke 21:14-15.

For Jesus, however, Wisdom is not an inherent attribute of man, but a living entity with its own voice, originating from God. It is the Wisdom of God. Let us spell it with a capital "W". Jesus even attributed the salvation of the Queen of Sheba to the fact that she came from the ends of the earth to hear this Wisdom.

Read Proverbs chapters 8 and 9.

“Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice?” Proverbs 8.1

One of the most interesting biblical definitions is that of wisdom and understanding.

“I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions. The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate. Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength. By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth.” Proverbs 8-16.

Wisdom, however, comes from God. It is not a gift given to man, but is divine intervention in human thought, providing counsel and knowledge necessary for salvation and for understanding the Lord's will. To do God's will, one must know it. To know God's will requires wisdom.

“I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me. Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver.” Proverbs 8:17-19.

BIBLICAL DEFINITIONS

Wisdom, like the Word, is a living, self-contained, and eternal entity. It comes from God and is with God. It is the thought of God. It is the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit himself. The term Wisdom is also used to designate the action of the Holy Spirit in the spirit of man.

Understanding is the fruit of the action of Wisdom in the spirit of man. Not an inherent attribute of man, but a blessing obtained through Grace.

“The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men.” Proverbs 8.22-31.

Wisdom (or Logos) precedes creation. God is the Supreme Intelligence. Before creating with the Word, God crafted it with His wisdom. Wisdom is a divine attribute that can be transmitted to humankind. To have wisdom and understanding is to have an open mind to the Spirit of God. For this, prayer, vigilance, fasting from sin, and the study of God's Word are necessary.

Read Matthew 26:41 and Mark 14:38

“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

“Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD.” Proverbs 8:32 -35.

BUT WISDOM IS JUSTIFIED OF ALL HER CHILDREN

Read Luke 7:24-35.
“But wisdom is justified of all her children.”

“Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men. Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.” Proverbs 8:31-36.

Wisdom has its own voice, dwells with prudence, possesses knowledge and counsel, has teachings, influences rulers and judges, was with God before the beginning of the world, served as His architect, produces fruits, grants life to those who find it, has children, and loves them.

Wisdom has sons, has children. Wisdom works in men who hear its instructions and get the favor of the Lord.

Wisdom is the action of the Holy Spirit, and Understanding is the fruit of the Holy Spirit's action in men.

"And Moses called Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whose heart the LORD had put wisdom, even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it. Exodus 36:2.

Read Jeremiah 9:23-26.

"Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.

Through **understanding**, the spirit structures its reasoning, directing its actions and emotions (the much-talked-about emotional intelligence).

Intelligence does not have the capacity to love. However, it can direct emotions through an active process so that our feelings do not stray from love.

Read the passage of Jesus in the Gethsemane in Matthew 26:36-46.

Jesus' soul was deeply saddened. So saddened that it reached death (separation from God). Jesus' sadness prevented him from being in communion with God. It was impossible to have love in one's heart with all this sadness. It was time to pray and watch. Through vigilance and prayer, Jesus directed his feelings toward the love of God and found strength again to rise, wake the disciples, and confront his betrayer.

Man's thoughts are a powerful tool for the work of the Holy Spirit. Through prayer, vigilance, and the study of the biblical Word, we place our thoughts at the disposal of the Holy Spirit, who takes charge of using them to direct our spirit toward the love of God.

"Understanding is a wellspring of life unto him that hath it: but the instruction of fools is folly." Proverbs 16:22.

To love God **"with all thy mind"** means to eagerly seek His teachings and the instruction of His Spirit, so that we may wisely serve Him in this world.

WITH ALL THY STRENGHT
THE FAITH IN GOD

Read Luke 17:5-6 and Matthew 21:18-22.

"If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you." Luke 17.6

"Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done" Matthew 21:21-22.

Read Matthew 14:22-33

"And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

Speaking of strength, Jesus was not referring to physical strength, but rather to the greatest spiritual strength that man can have: faith in God. Faith is a powerful force: it moves mountains,

transplants trees, makes one walk on water. Faith can be great or small, but it needs to be understood to be effective.

Jesus left us a parable about the relationship of faith and dependence between man and God.

We find this parable in Luke 18:1-8.

“And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them. I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth??

The widow depended on the judge. Believing she could obtain justice through persistence, this woman pestered him, asking him to judge her case. Finally, the judge listened to her. Upon being heard, the widow ceased to depend on the judge and to demand his attention. Man also depends on God. When a situation troubles him, and he cannot resolve it on his own, he often ceases to trust himself and turns to God in faith. God may or may not solve his problem. By solving it, man risks thinking he no longer depends on God. What will become of his faith then?

Faith is essential for man's salvation. Without faith, man has no strength to love God. How then can he follow his principal commandment?

Faith is the force that makes man dependent on God's will.

It may seem paradoxical to speak of a force that makes us dependent on something. But that is precisely the point.

Man has a great natural tendency to take his own course, to depend on himself, to self-generate, to self-sustain, to self-direct, to self-idolize. We know that this is the wrong path. To deviate from this tendency, man needs another great force, also internal, to leave his own paths and assume his dependence on God. This force is faith.

Faith in the shepherd keeps the sheep from getting lost in the desert.

"To love God with all your strength" is equivalent to saying "to depend on God with all your faith."

One of the greatest mistakes of man in the world is faith in anything other than God. Faith in oneself, faith in other men, faith in idols, faith in images, faith in "saints," faith in "life," faith in luck, faith in angels, faith in spirits, faith in divination, faith in horoscopes, faith in witchcraft, faith in demonic pacts. Wrong faith. Things fabricated by the enemy to divert man from faith in God.

“Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is”. Jeremiah 17: 5-7.

THE HOLY TRINITY

The concept of the Trinity (even though this word doesn't exist in the Bible), as the perfect communion between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, was established by the Word of Jesus:

Matthew 28:19-20.

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

AND I HAVE DECLARED UNTO THEM THY NAME

“O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.” John 17: 25-26.

To love something, it is necessary to know it. The world does not know God, and therefore cannot love Him. In these two verses, Jesus uses the verb **"to know"** four times, so that the same love that God had placed in Jesus would be in the hearts of the disciples.

Still in John chapter 17, let's quote verse 3.

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”

He who truly knows God and Jesus Christ already has eternal life.

Knowing God, then, is not just a theoretical recitation. It implies salvation itself. It is more than a lesson in philosophy or theology. It is more than elaborate reasoning.

To love God, then, it is necessary to know Him. The first step to this is accepting that Jesus was sent by Him. The second step is learning from Jesus.

In the previous passage, Jesus calls God **“Father.”**

In the Old Testament, God is very rarely called Father. Most of the time, He is called LORD. But Jesus almost exclusively called Him Father.

Perhaps it is difficult to love a LORD. But it is much easier to love a Father.

But here we need some clarification:

What do you understand by father (or a parent)?

People generally confuse the person of the father with the figure of the progenitor. But the progenitor is not always a father. And the father is not always a progenitor.

A father is more than a simple progenitor. A man who fathers a child with a woman and then abandons her with the child, or even sperm donors, can be considered a progenitor, but not fathers.

A father is someone who has an emotional relationship with his child. A relationship of profound love, almost to the point of dependence.

A man who adopts an abandoned child, creating this emotional bond with them, is much more deserving of the title of father than the progenitor who abandoned them.

And what do you understand by son?

People generally confuse the figure of the son with the figure of the offspring

An offspring is one who was generated (by the progenitor). But the father is not necessarily the biological progenitor. And a child is not always a biological offspring of this father.

Similarly, being a child involves a relationship of emotional dependence. A child loves and is emotionally dependent on their father, while a biological child may not love or be emotionally dependent on their biological parent.

THY BROTHER WAS DEAD, AND IS ALIVE AGAIN

Read Luke 15:11-32.

The prodigal son had received his father's love and a great fortune. As a child, he loved his father and stayed with him. As he grew older, this love cooled, and this character preferred to abandon his father.

He squandered his possessions and suffered the bitterness of need. He repented later, acknowledged his sin, recognized that he was not worthy to be considered his father's son, but returned to him dependent, needy, and repentant. Note that here, sin is the separation from the Father.

After being abandoned, the father considered his son **"lost"** and **"dead."** The result of sin (read: separation from God) is perdition and death.

The unborn child who does not love his progenitor does not deserve the title of son. The son has a relationship with love and emotional dependence with his father.

Just as a parent can abandon their offspring, ceasing to be a father, so too can a child abandon their parent, ceasing to be a son. This is exactly what happens to the sinner. While we are in sin, we are separated from God, and we are not his children, only creatures created by the Creator.

God is Father!

This was one of the truths that Jesus revealed to us.

If God is Father and has a Father's love for us, then nothing is more reasonable than that He be loved with all our hearts, so that we can reciprocate that love and truly assume the position of children.

THAT YE MAY BE THE CHILDREN OF YOUR FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN

Read now Jesus’ words in Matthew 5: 43-48 and Luke 6:11-32

“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust”

God is the Creator of the Universe and everything in it (Genesis chapters 1 and 2).

But not only is God the Creator, but God is also the Father of all creation, since God loves and is present in everything He does.

He who loves the Creator, consequently, loves creation, for the hand of the Creator is in creation.

To love God with all our heart, it is necessary to love all His work, including ourselves, our neighbor, and our enemy.

For this reason, Jesus says in Matthew 22:39 that the second commandment is like the first.

“And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

In John 13:34-35,

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

To become children of our Heavenly Father, it is necessary to love even our enemies, because they, too, are part of God's creation and are also blessed with His love. In this lies the perfection of the Father and the perfection of the Son: transcendental love, which surpasses judgment of good and evil, of the just and the unjust. **“Judge not, that ye be not judged”.** He who truly loves does not judge. He who truly loves does not need judgment.

“On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Matthew 22:40.

The understanding that Jesus brings us is: God is a perfect Father. This means, according to Jesus' Word, that God is the Creator, and that He loves all of His creation. To love God with all your heart, then, is equivalent to loving Him as a child loves their Father, and not only Him, but all of His creation. By doing this, we return to the status of children of God, from which sin had taken us. To love God with all your understanding is equivalent to knowing Him as a child knows their Father, also knowing His will for His children through His commandments.

THY FAITH HATH MADE THEE WHOLE

Read Mark 10:46-52.

Bartimaeus was blind and a beggar. How could he depend on himself? He depended on God's mercy. Knowing himself to be dependent on God, Bartimaeus had a great strength that impelled him to Jesus. He shouted and shouted louder and louder for the Son of David. Upon learning that he was being called, he threw off his cloak (stripped himself of his belongings) and jumped up (he did not hesitate at all, and his joy was great). When he answered Jesus about his desire, he called him Master and asked to "**see again**".

Bartimaeus regained his sight. Not only with his physical eyes, but with his spiritual eyes, and now seeing and believing, he began to follow Jesus.

Bartimaeus had faith and publicly professed it to Jesus. He was saved. He was a child of God. It was not faith that healed his eyes, but Jesus and Divine mercy. It was, however, his faith that, by making him recognize his dependence on God, propelled him to Jesus, who saved him from his sins.

Cases like Bartimaeus', however, are not the rule but the exception. Bartimaeus was in the real presence of the incarnate Jesus and had the privilege of experiencing a radical, undeniable act of God's power.

Ordinary people see with their physical eyes but are generally spiritually blind. Blind because they do not see sin where it manifests itself. Blind because they refuse to see the sin they commit daily and persistently. Blind, in short, because they do not recognize that sin resides within themselves and that they themselves serve as objects of manifestation for Satan.

Read Luke 17:11-19.

“There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger?”
“And he said unto him: Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.”

Jesus, in his ministry, healed everyone indiscriminately. Even those who sought Him only for physical healing, with no interest in salvation, were also healed. Ten lepers were healed in this episode. However, only one had faith in God, and through this faith he was saved.

And what about you? **“What seek ye?”** Only physical healing, or salvation? Only knowledge, or salvation?

WHICH OF THEM WILL LOVE HIM MOST?

Read Luke 7:36-50.

“Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.”
“Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.”

Those who do not recognize themselves as sinners have no reason to love Jesus and the one who sent Him.

Those who recognize that they have many sins have great reasons to love Jesus (the redeemer of sins) and the one who sent Him.

Recognizing oneself as a sinner, dependent on God's forgiveness, and accepting the remission of sins through the sacrifice of Jesus are starting points for loving God and Jesus.

If we do not recognize and identify our sins, we do not have the elements to love God.

Luke does not make it clear what the woman's sins were. Perhaps they were less important than those of the Pharisee. But she recognized them. She repented of them. Therefore, she had faith; that is, she became dependent on God and Jesus.

If you want to have faith, here is a very easy way: recognize all your sins and repent of them. Depend on God and Jesus for forgiveness.

If you want to love God and Jesus with all your heart, here's a very easy way: acknowledge all your sins and repent of them. Love God for forgiveness and Jesus for the sacrifice.

Recognizing yourself as a sinner is essential for us to recognize the love that God has for us and the dependence we have on Him.

Repentance, faith, love, and salvation; four things that go together, one leading to the other and depending on the other.

BUT I HAVE PRAYED FOR THEE, THAT THY FAITH FAIL NOT

Read Luke 22: 31-62.

Faith can be great or small. It can strengthen or weaken. It does not depend only on man, but mainly on the action of the Holy Spirit upon the believer, which in turn depends on how man develops his feelings and his thoughts.

Peter would be**“sift as wheat”** by Satan. It would be a hard test. He had promised to follow Jesus until death and had been warned by him that he would deny him three times. In fact, he denied him and had nothing more to offer Jesus in his last gaze but his own cowardice.

Peter's faith depended not only on himself, but also on the will of God, who, through the intercession of Jesus himself, strengthened his faith and supported him in a moment of weakness. Judas was not so fortunate (and his sin was not very different from Peter's), but Judas lacked faith that Jesus could forgive his sins and preferred to surrender himself to death. Humanity in general likes to have faith, appreciates believing in its own ability to do and achieve. It deludes itself into thinking that it will be chosen for its merits to live in the presence of the Holy God. Man likes to have faith in himself. But true faith is faith in God and in Jesus. True faith dispels faith in man and creates dependence on God. Man has the illusion of being and doing. But if it is not by the will of the Sovereign God, man does nothing and is nothing. While Peter had faith in Jesus, he remained afloat, but when his faith turned to himself, he began to sink. Whoever believes only in himself, however well he acts on earth, will never be saved. But if there is faith in God, then through this faith a person is saved.

To worship in spirit means to worship through the attributes of the spirit, that is, feeling, understanding, and faith. Three distinct but intricate and overlapping things, which are summarized by the great commandment, which we never tire of repeating:

“And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment”. Mark 12:30

WORSHIP THE FATHER IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH

“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him”. John 4:23

And what is true worship?
In fact, what is truth?
Stop for a moment and think: what is truth?
What is truth for you?
What is your truth?

HUMAN DEFINITION

We can define the feminine noun "truth" in human terms as "**the faithful description of an aspect of reality.**"

In material terms, this concept is easy to understand. If I state that "you have five fingers on your right hand," this sentence will only be a "truth" if it corresponds to the reality that there are actually five fingers on your right hand. I can also say, "You have five fingernails on your right hand." We then have two faithful descriptions of the same reality: "your right hand." The same reality can give rise to several truths, independent, complementary, or even paradoxical, but never contradictory. If two descriptions of the same reality are contradictory, then one of them will necessarily be false. "Reality" is one, but the "truths" originating from this "reality" can be several.

I can also state that you have twenty-seven bones in your right hand. If you are not familiar with anatomy, you will need confirmation of this fact to know whether this description is accurate. In this case, you will need to consult an anatomy book or have an X-ray of your hand to confirm the accuracy of the description. The more detailed the description, the more difficult the confirmation.

So how can we be sure of "heavenly truths"?
Who truly knows divine reality to give us a "faithful representation of this reality"?
Who descended from heaven to reveal spiritual truths to us?
And how can the limited human mind assimilate celestial and divine reality?
Are we currently able to conceive or verify the accuracy of these truths when they are transmitted to us?

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” John 1.51.

“Verily, verily, I say unto thee: Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” John 3:3.

“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” John 3:5.

“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.” John 3:11-13.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.” John 5:24-25.

“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, we be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” John 8:31-36.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.” John 8:51.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM. John 8:58.

"Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." John 10:7-9

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." John 14:12.

"Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." John 18:37.

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." John 14:6.

"If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." John 14:23-24

"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." John 17:17

BIBLICAL DEFINITION

Truth is the Word of God.
To worship in truth means to worship through the Word of God.
To worship in truth means not to resist the Word of Jesus!
Whoever **believes** in the word of Jesus does not come into judgment and has eternal life!
Whoever **remains** in the word of Jesus is a true disciple, will know the truth, and through it will have liberation from sins.
Whoever **keeps** the word of Jesus will be loved by God and will be the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

THE LIVING WATERS

"For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water". Jeremiah 2:13

The **"fountain of living waters"** was first presented by God through Jeremiah.

Read John 4:1-42.

"If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.
Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

The Samaritan woman asked Jesus for **"a well of water springing up into everlasting life."**
Jesus immediately gave the **"living water"** to the woman, even though she didn't realize it.
After the conversation with Jesus, the Samaritan woman **"left her water pot"** (forgot her material possessions), went to call her fellow citizens, and said, **"Come and see."** She repeated Jesus' Word without even listening to it.
And because of her Word, many Samaritans believed in Jesus, and had the opportunity to go to Jacob's well and hear the Word spoken by the Master's own mouth.
The **"living water"** is the Word of Jesus.
Kept in our hearts, it is capable of quenching all spiritual thirst and, at the same time, is an eternal source of blessings for those to whom we witness.
The Samaritan woman received the Word of Jesus, the **"living water"** that, in addition to quenching her spiritual thirst, became **"a well of water springing up into everlasting life"** converting and leading countless Samaritans to Jesus.

It is in the Word of Jesus that the Holy Spirit dwells. That is why the Word of Jesus is alive. That is why the Word of Jesus transforms. That is why the Word of Jesus has the power to work. That is why the water becomes "a spring of water welling up to eternal life." Whoever keeps the Word of Jesus can repeat it countless times. They can repeat it, transmitting it and spreading it eternally.

"If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." John 7:37-38.

Read Ezekiel 47:1-12

"These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh."

Based on this Word, Jesus drew further comparisons between people healed by His water and fish and fishermen, as in Mathew 4:18-20 and Matthew 13:47-50.

IF I WASH THEE NOT, THOU HAST NO PART WITH ME

Read John 13:1-11; and then chapter 15:1-3.

Before Passover, knowing that his hour had come, during supper, Jesus rose, girded himself with a towel, poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to dry them with the towel with which he was girded.

"If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me."

Jesus doesn't want us to be soiled by sin. On the contrary, He wants us clean from head to toe. He didn't bathe the disciples, at least not with physical water, but with the living water, which is His Word.

"Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you."

When we surrender ourselves to Jesus and receive His Word, accepting it, believing in it, and practicing it, we will be cleansed by this word. But during our earthly journey, it is almost inevitable that we will "get our feet dirty," that is, we will err, sin, and become "dirty" with the earth of the world. Jesus then spontaneously comes to meet us and washes us again, so that we may remain clean.

"He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit."

It is Jesus who cleanses us through His Word. The living water, which quenches thirst, becomes a spring and cleanses. Notice also that the Word of Jesus is not ministered only verbally. Jesus actually girded himself with a towel, poured water into a basin, and actually washed the disciples' feet. It was a concrete gesture to convey a message: a living Word. The Word became action, transmitting God's message. His example is also a Word.

Read John 13:12-20.

"Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

With this living Word, Jesus was demonstrating what the ministry of those who carry the Word should be like. First, the minister of the Word must assume the **posture of a servant**, humbly serving his brothers. Second, the servant must be girded; that is, he must **prepare himself** for his ministry. Third, the servant must fill the basin with water; that is, he **must be a vessel of the Word**, so that he can use it. Fourth, this act must be bilateral; that is, the servant must also **accept that the Word be ministered to him**, in order to have his feet cleansed.

And finally, Jesus ends the lesson by consolidating His presence in this act:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me."

Read now the entire chapter of John 15.

"Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love."

After washing the disciples' feet, Jesus made this an example. Not the act of washing feet materially, but the sharing of his Word, which, like living water, is constantly purifying us. By washing their feet and recommending that the disciples do the same, Jesus concretely taught that the disciples should help each other on their common journey, cleansing themselves through the Word of Jesus.

But cleansing through the Word has a common denominator: love.

The Word preaches love, and therefore it can only be used with love. If it is used as a reprimand or attack, with disdain or hatred, it is no longer a message from Jesus.

To worship in truth means to worship through the Word of Jesus, which says:

"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you."

"To wash one another's feet" means using the Word of Jesus, with love, to help our brother cleanse himself of the almost inevitable dirt that clings to our feet as we walk through the world.

In some churches, believers throw water into a basin and wash their feet. By performing this physical act, they are transmitting the Divine Word, the living Word that is ministered not only orally but also through actions. The purpose of the act is not to leave the feet clean, but to transmit and remember the essential meaning of this Word.

"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

GO, WASH IN THE POOL OF THE SENT

"This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." John 6.29

Read now John 9:1-41.

"Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him: Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

"Dost thou believe on the Son of God?"
"For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind."

The healing of the man born blind is a very significant Word.

To open the blind man's eyes, Jesus mixed his own saliva (the water of the Word) and applied it to the earth (earthly or carnal nature). He applied the mud to the blind man's eyes and told him to go and wash (again the water), but not in just any water, but in the water from the **fountain of the Sent One** (Jesus' own Word).

"If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." John 13:8.

And the blind man began to see and to preach the miracle of Jesus.

Before we know Jesus, we are all truly spiritually blind.

We wander lost through the world, stumbling, without fixed goals, without certainty in life. We don't see, we don't know, we wander aimlessly.

While we are spiritually blind, the work of God has not yet manifested itself in us.

The work of God is not opening the physical eyes of the man born blind, but the emergence of faith that leads us to believe in Jesus.

For now, it is still day. We still have time to believe.

When night falls (and we will talk about this later), our time to believe will have expired.

For now, Jesus is still among us, working and being "the light of the world."

Let us believe while we have time.

THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE

Read John 8:21-59.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin".
"And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not".
"Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?"
"Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word".
"He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God".
"Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death."

Sin is synonymous with slavery and death. Sin is the fruit of lies.

The Word of Jesus is the living truth. Being the living truth, the Word has the power to liberate from sin.

But the Truth is trustworthy. And lies are false. They are opposite and antagonistic things. They are absolute and not relative. There is no relative truth, nor partial lie. The strategy of lies is to pass itself off as truth. But the truth does not accept lies. No one convinces Jesus of sin. If you are a sinner, acknowledge your sin and repent. Confess to Jesus and ask for forgiveness. Do not try to convince yourself that you are right, and that your "little sin" is unimportant. Whoever does so is in the process of dying.

Whoever is able to hear the Word of Jesus understands its language. Whoever prefers to listen to lies does not understand the Word of Jesus. First of all, it is necessary **to accept the Word of Jesus as absolute truth.**

Those who keep and remain in the Word of Jesus know the liberating truth and will not see death (sin) eternally.

WHY CALL YE ME, LORD, LORD, AND DO NOT THE THINGS WHICH I SAY?

Luke 6: 46-49.

"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great."

And in Matthew 7:21-23.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

"Why ye do not the things which I say?"

The PRACTICE of the WORD OF JESUS is the FOUNDATION upon which the attributes of the spirit are BUILT:

FAITH in the Word delivers from judgment and leads to ETERNAL LIFE.

THOUGHTS, through the Word, know the TRUTH and obtain LIBERATION FROM SINS.

FEELINGS, transformed by the Word, prepare the heart to become a DWELLING PLACE of the Holy Spirit.

Loving God with all our strength also means PRACTICING the Word. DOING the WILL of the Father.

It is not enough to hear, admire, and believe in the Word of Jesus.

It is necessary to KEEP, PRACTICE, and REMAIN in the Word of Jesus.

In other words, it is necessary to BELIEVE in the Word of Jesus.

QUEM CRÊ EM MIM, CRÊ NAQUELE QUE ME ENVIOU

"**Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me."** John 12:44.

Do you believe that God exists, or do you have faith in God?

Having faith in God is much more than believing in His existence.

Having faith in God means depending on God and trusting in the Word of Jesus.

Having faith in God means fully accepting our dependence on the Creator and faithfully carrying out His will, as manifested in the Word of Jesus.

Having faith in God means having Him as the Sovereign and absolute Lord of our lives.

Meditate deeply now on Luke, chapter 9, verses 23 to 27. Immerse yourself in this Word. Give it your full attention.

This is what Jesus **"said to them all"**
The key to his Word.
The essence of his preaching.
The secret to salvation.
What really mattered.

"If any man..."
Anyone can. He made no exceptions.
He has the power to forgive everyone.

"...will come after me,"
The desire is within you.
You have free will to follow Jesus.

"let him deny himself,"

For you, you can't!
If you're in charge, you can't!
If you belong to yourself, you can't!
If the glory is for you, you can't!
If your voice speaks louder, you can't!
If your will prevails, you can't!
If you are the one who dwells in your heart, you can't!
If you keep your own Word, you can't!
If your verb is conjugated in the first-person singular, you can't!
The glory is for Jesus!
The command belongs to Jesus!
The most important voice is Jesus'!
The will that prevails is Jesus'!
Jesus should dwell in your heart!
The Word to be kept is Jesus'!
The verb is conjugated in the third person singular!
If you belong to Jesus, He can for you!

At first glance, it may seem difficult, or even impossible, to follow Jesus' Word to the letter. It is indeed impossible from a purely human perspective to systematically follow all his commandments. But when we surrender our hearts and our being into the Lord's hands, denying ourselves, everything becomes possible, easy, simple, and delightful. This is the great secret (that He told everyone) to following Christ: **denying oneself.**

"...take up his cross daily, and follow me."

In this profound message, Jesus was prophesying.
He had not yet been crucified, but He told everyone to take up their cross and follow Him."
When He said this, many certainly did not understand the meaning. What cross was this?
Only after the crucifixion did everything become clear, including the meaning of the cross.
Taking up your cross and following Jesus is embracing the cause that God has given us on Earth. It is facing trials as elements of our liberation. It approaches life's problems as sanctifying processes, since they are what give us the opportunity to put into practice and consolidate, through actions, the Word of Jesus.
The decision to surrender to Jesus can be made on a single, significant day, or it can grow in the heart like a seed in fertile ground. But the journey is daily, the growth is progressive, and the transformation that studying the Word of Jesus brings about is consolidated daily through our actions. It is in our daily lives that we prove who we truly are and what we truly seek.
The cross freed Jesus from his body of flesh.
The cross of Jesus freed us from our sins.
Our cross frees us from ourselves when we take it up to follow Jesus.
It is by taking up our cross and following Jesus that we accept that His sacrifice has forgiven our sins.

"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels."

And in John 12:24-26:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.

What are we, after all?
What are we before the Creator?
What is a grain of sand before the sea?
What is a grain of wheat in a meadow?
We are like a grain of wheat!
A miserable and insignificant grain of wheat!
If we insist on living our lives like grains of wheat, we remain alone. We produce nothing.
But if we die, we bear fruit, and our fruit will be eternal.
We need to kill our "self."
We need to renounce our lives in this world.
We need to renounce our path in this world.
We need to return to the Father.
We need to follow and serve Jesus.
We need to confess before God and men that Jesus is our Savior and Lord.

EU O CONFESSAREI DIANTE DE MEU PAI

Read now in Matthew 16, verses 13 to 20, Peter's confession.

"But whom say ye that I am?"

This is another question Jesus asks his disciples.
Jesus wants to know what He means to you!
What does Jesus mean to you?
Is He just a spiritual entity who came to Earth to preach love?
Is He just an enlightened spirit who guides the destinies of the Earth?
Is He just a distant and perfect entity who serves as a model for your life?
Is He just the Master who knows the truth and therefore deserves all your consideration?
If that's all, then for you, He is nobody.
And what do you say to the world about Jesus?
Who do you say He is?

What is your testimony about Jesus?

“But whom say ye that I am?

Learn from Peter how to confess Jesus.
Jesus is the Christ!
Jesus is the Son of God!
Jesus is your personal Savior!
Jesus is your personal Liberator!
Jesus, out of personal love for you, bought the burden of your sins with his own blood!
Jesus has a personal love for you! He knows your name and your heart long before you could imagine that He could exist!
Jesus knows your paths before you imagine walking them!
Jesus has a very special moment reserved for you: the moment of confession.
Accept Jesus as Christ: confess Him as your Savior!
Accept Jesus as the Son of God: confess Him as Lord of your life!
Accept in fullness the love and sacrifice of Jesus: surrender your life to Him, for which He has already paid the price of blood!
Only then will you live!
Only then will you be saved from death and your own perdition!
Only through the path of Jesus does the prodigal son return to the Father's house, from whom sin separated him.
Let Him rule your life.
Let Him establish a personal relationship with you.
Keep and practice His Word, and let Him dwell in your heart.
And if you do so:

“Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”

“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.” Matthew 10:32

Read John 3:1-3.

Note the great difference between Peter's confession and Nicodemus's declaration.
Peter openly confesses to Jesus that he recognizes him as Christ, as God's "Anointed One," the Sent One, the Son of the living God. In response, Jesus affirms that Peter is "rock."
Nicodemus seeks out Jesus (in the dead of night) and calls him Teacher (a title he himself also held). Nicodemus acknowledges that Jesus came from God but declares that this was not given to him by the Spirit, but rather by a logical and rational conclusion, "for no one who was not from God could perform the signs that Jesus performed." By this statement, Jesus declares to Nicodemus that he needed to be born again, to stop listening to the voice of the flesh, and to start listening to the voice of the Spirit.
Our relationship with Jesus is not a purely rational relationship. It is a relationship of faith. Faith, in turn, is the fruit of the Spirit's action in man. Through reasoning we might even conclude that Jesus was not an ordinary man, or even that he came from God, but then we will not be saved by Him. Faith tells us that Jesus is the Sent One, the Son of the living God, and that our salvation depends on Him. With faith we are "blessed" and become "rock," becoming part of the Church of Christ. Faith is more valuable than reason.

Read Numbers 21:4-9.
Next, in chapter 3 of the Gospel of John, verses 1-21.
And then read in John 13:27-35.

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” John 3:14-15.

After fleeing Egypt, the Israelites were impatient. Many spoke ill of God and Moses, and they did not enjoy the bread sent by God.
The LORD then punished the Israelites by sending serpents that bit and killed.
The people recognized their sin and asked Moses to pray to God to remove the serpents.
God recognized that there was no faith among the Israelites. Despite all the signs, wonders, and blessings, the people did not place themselves in dependence on God. The LORD then did

something strange, but of infinite wisdom. He did not remove the serpents, but commanded Moses to make a bronze serpent.

Whoever was previously bitten by the desert serpents was condemned to death, but now it was enough to simply look at the bronze serpent to be immediately healed. Of course, this process involved a process of faith. Not in the bronze serpent, but in the Word of Him who had commanded its making.

Jesus made an analogy with the bronze serpent.

Whoever is separated from the Father is "lost" and "dead" (as we saw in the parable of the prodigal son), but...

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Simply believing in Jesus is enough for those who are dead to be born again and live. Not those who are dead in the flesh, but those who are dead in spirit (with dead faith). Not born again in the flesh, but born of water and the Spirit.

"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." John 3:8

Nicodemus recognized Jesus as a Teacher sent from God. He then sought Him to drink the water of life. Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a teacher of the law. He was probably looking in the Master of teachers for what he most discussed in the synagogue: knowledge. In fact, is this what you are looking for? Knowledge about the other side of life?

If you are a "Nicodemus," listen to this Word of Jesus for you. It is as if He were saying to you:

Nicodemus, what good is all your knowledge if it won't bring you into the kingdom of God? Throw it all away, Nicodemus. Be born again. Be renewed in the Spirit. Drink my water. Believe in me and have faith! Just have faith in me, and you will be healed from the death sentence imposed by the serpent. Depend on me through faith and not through knowledge. I am the only begotten Son of the Father. I am the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. You don't need to have knowledge of earthly things! You don't need to have knowledge of heavenly things! Forget the dozens of theories that try to explain the way the Father works. That is only up to Him. He will not ask for your permission or opinion before doing anything. Everything He wants, He can do. He is the Creator. He is Almighty. If He wants to save an Israelite bitten by a poisonous snake in exchange for just a look, it's none of your business. It doesn't concern you. For you, what matters is being born of the Spirit, drinking from my water, and simply believing in me. Depend on God through faith and not through knowledge. Knowledge imprisons, Nicodemus. Free yourself from the shackles of knowledge and be free! Free as the wind! Free through faith! Just as everyone born of the Spirit is, who does not know where he comes from or where he is going, but blows where he wills, and his voice is heard.

BORN OF WATER

Let's return to the woman of Samaria in John 4:1-42.

"Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

When the Samaritan woman asked Jesus for living water, Jesus immediately told her to call her husband and to come and hear the Word.

The living water is the Word of Jesus. By asking for living water, the woman received it immediately and began calling the other Samaritans, who came to Jesus and believed, both because of the Word of Jesus spoken by his own mouth and because of the Word of Jesus spoken by the woman's mouth. The Word of Jesus immediately became, for the Samaritan woman, the source of living water, which transformed, converted, and quenched the thirst of several Samaritans who believed Jesus was the Savior of the world.

The "**living water,**" which becomes **"a well of water springing up into everlasting life"** is the Word of Jesus.

Being born of water means being reached and transformed by the Word, keeping it in one's heart, witnessing it, teaching it, preaching it, so as to become an eternal source of this Word.

Baptism is a concrete act of faith, where material water carries the Spirit, which reaches the believer. Just as it is a concrete gesture, it is also a Word that represents the transformation the Word (the living water) produces in the believer's heart.

When John the Baptist baptized Jesus, he completed his mission on earth, for in baptizing Him, he transmitted to Him the Word and the Spirit that accompanied it, and in fact, Jesus' first words were similar to those of John the Baptist:

"Repent (ye): for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" Matthew 3:2 and 4:17.

Christian baptism represents the acceptance of the Word of Jesus and the Spirit that accompanies it, that is, the birth through water and the Spirit that happens at the moment when the believer, hearing the Word and believing in it, receives the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit dwells in the Word of Jesus. Being born of water means being born through the transformation that the Word of Jesus brings about in the believer's heart.

BORN OF THE SPIRIT

Read now Jesus' explanation of his mission, in John 5:19-47.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live."

"For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;"

"For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will."

The great truth is this: we do not have life in ourselves.

Life is in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

How can we claim to have or be anything if we don't even have life in ourselves?

If we depend on ourselves, we are dead.

We only have life if we believe in the Father and His Son and receive the Holy Spirit.

The more we sin and distance ourselves from the Father, the less life we will have.

If we do not believe in the Father, if we do not hear the voice of the Son of God, if we do not have His Word abiding within us, if we do not surrender to Jesus, if we do not have the love of God within us, we will not have life.

It is not a promise; it is reality.

It is not a threat; it is a fact.

It is not the future. It is the present.

"Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." John 6:68-69.

To have life, it is necessary to believe (depend) on the Father and His Son and receive the Holy Spirit.

"**To believe**" means to depend on the life that comes from the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, through the **"words of eternal life."** John 6:68-69.

The Word that brings eternal life is the Word of Jesus.

Being born of water and the Spirit means receiving the life of the Holy Spirit through faith in the Word of Jesus.

"How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" John 5:44

Glory is the exaltation of life.

Life comes from the one true God.

There is no greater glory than receiving the life that comes from the Father.

But there is no way to receive life from that which is dead.

"I receive not honour from men." John 5:41

Read John 12:37-43,

Accepting glory from men is a trap. It's like receiving life from that which is dead. When we accept glory from one another, we are turning our backs on the giver of life. When we glorify ourselves,

we stop believing (depending) on God and begin to believe (depending) on ourselves (who don't even have life). If we stop seeking the glory (life) that comes from God, we are dead.

The life of those who do not believe is transitory. But the life of those who believe is eternal.

Whoever believes in the Word of Jesus has the Word of the Father permanently within them.

The Word of man has no life and therefore cannot transmit glory (which is the exaltation of life).

The Word of Jesus is alive and transmits eternal life to those who keep it.

Whoever receives life through the Word of Jesus has within them the love and life that comes from the Father.

To be born again is to believe in, accept, receive, and depend on the life that comes from the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit through the Word of Jesus.

Accept the Son.
Receive the Spirit.
Depend on the Father.
The Holy Spirit works through the Word of Jesus.
The Word of Jesus is the instrument of the Holy Spirit.
The Holy Spirit gives life through the Word of Jesus.
Whoever keeps the Word has life.

Now read the parable of the sower in Matthew 13:1-23.

“But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.”
“But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”

In this parable, Jesus compares the Word to a seed. The soil is the heart of the one who receives the Word. Jesus' explanation is clear enough.

The three harvests represent the three different generations of human beings. Upon receiving the Word in the prime of life, the young believer abundantly spreads the word among those of his generation (bearing fruit a hundredfold). In middle age, he continues to produce fruit in the generation of his children, abundantly, but not as much as in the vitality of youth (bearing fruit sixtyfold). In old age, he can still bear fruit in the generation of his grandchildren, but now, with the limitations of the physical body and the difficulty of communicating with the new generations, he bears far less fruit (thirtyfold).

EU SOU O PÃO DA VIDA

Read Deuteronomy chapters 8 and 9, and Matthew 4:1-11.

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

The forty days Jesus spent fasting in the desert before the start of his mission, in a way, remind us of the forty years the Israelites wandered after Moses.

It is as if, in a certain way, Jesus also redeemed this sacrifice imposed on the people of God for himself. And like them, Jesus fed only on the Word of God. For forty days!

Not only Jesus, but also Moses remained for forty days and forty nights fasting on Mount Sinai to receive the Word of God: this twice in succession! The first time receiving the law. The second to intercede for the people who had sinned against God and were about to be destroyed.

The Word that proceeds from the mouth of God is spiritual food.

The Word of God carries the Spirit that gives life and nourishes the soul, in the same way that bread and meat carry within them the chemical energy that nourishes and gives life to the cells of the body.

Moses experienced and recorded this. Jesus relived this experience and confirmed it through his own Word. Moreover, the forty days of fasting that Jesus spent in the desert are also a Word, which continually conveys its message to us:

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

The idea of "eating" the Word of God was not a new idea for the Jews.

Read Ezekiel 2:8 through 3:3.

In this passage, the prophet literally "eats" the scroll on which the Word of God was written. The association is strong and literal. It has a profound spiritual meaning: the Word of God is the food of the soul.

Also read chapter 8 of the book of Amos.

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD" Amós 8:11.

The Word of God is food for the soul.
Just as a lack of food leads the body to physical death, the lack of God's Word also leads to spiritual death.
Do not turn away from the Word of God. Never stop feeding on it.
When you say your Lord's Prayer, remember the spiritual meaning of the request:

"Give us this day our daily bread." Mathew 6:11.

Continuing with Jesus' words after the multiplication of the loaves in John 6:22-50.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled."
"Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."
"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven."
"For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world
"I am that bread of life."

It was difficult for the Jews to understand the spiritual meaning of Jesus' words.
And these words were spoken right after the multiplication of the loaves.
At one moment, Jesus speaks and multiplies the wheat bread.
Immediately afterward, Jesus teaches that there is another bread: the true bread, the living bread, which, like manna, comes down from heaven to give life.
One is food that perishes.
The other is food that endures eternal life. And we must work for it.
Work to receive the bread that the Son of Man gives us, and not wait for it to fall from the sky.
And the bread that Jesus gives us is the Word of God.

The Bread is the Word of God.

BEWARE OF THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES.

Read Exodus 12:1-20.
Read Matthew 15:1-9.
Read Matthew 16:5-12.

It is often difficult, or even impossible, to fully interpret the commandments of the Old Testament without the light and discernment that the Word of Jesus brings.
The Passover, as prescribed by God to the Israelites enslaved in Egypt, materialized, through concrete elements, a spiritual guidance that we only came to fully understand after Jesus.
One of the orders given in the celebration of Passover was that the bread should be unleavened, that is, without yeast. In fact, yeast was forbidden during all seven days of Passover, and anyone who ate leavened bread would be excluded from the congregation of Israel.
But what is yeast anyway?
Biologically speaking, yeast consists of a leavening agent, that is, a microorganism, which, multiplying in the bread dough, consumes part of its carbohydrates (sugars), generating through a chemical reaction a gas (carbon dioxide), which, infiltrating the middle of the dough, makes it soft, expanding its volume.
Yeast, therefore, is not a food and its only function is to make the dough more visually appealing and soft. But how can we understand this from a spiritual point of view?

Spiritually speaking, **"bread" is the Word of God.**
The Word of God was initially given to the Hebrews in a simple, direct, concise, concrete, and objective way. It had no leaven.

Over the years, the guardians of the Law gradually began to incorporate precepts and customs into the Word of God that reflected their own human ideas and concepts.

The Word, which was simple and consistent, began to swell and soften.

The same thing happened to the Word of Jesus in the centuries that separate us from His physical presence.

Eating unleavened bread means feeding on the pure Word of God, without human interpretations.

Guarding oneself against the leaven of the Pharisees means rejecting everything that does not come from the Lord, but which has been added to His Law by human hands.

Beware! The source of the Word of God is the Bible.

Feed on it. What does not come from it is only leaven. It makes things beautiful and eye-catching, but it is not nutritious or necessary.

"Beware of the leaven of the pharisees".

Leaven is the doctrine of men.

THE BREAD THAT I WILL GIVE IS MY FLESH

Read John 6:51-65.
Also read John 1:1-14.

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."

"Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

"For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.."

"He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him."

"As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me."

The Jews were already scandalized. After Jesus stated that it is necessary to eat his flesh and drink his blood, they were even more so, because they did not understand the spiritual meaning of Jesus' words.

As we have already seen, bread means the Word of God.

We can then translate the spiritual meaning of Jesus' Word as follows:

"The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

"The living word which I will give for the life of the world is my flesh"

Jesus calls the Word of God spoken by the Son of Man: **"my flesh."**

The **"flesh"** is the Word of Jesus. When we understand the spiritual meaning assigned to this symbolism, we can comprehend God's plan and will for those who are saved in Christ Jesus.

MY BLOOD IS DRINK INDEED

Open your Bible to Leviticus 17:10-16.

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul."

Now in John 6:41-71.

"For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed."

"He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him."

"As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me."

“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”

A biology teacher could easily state in a class, perhaps using different words, that "the life of the flesh is in the blood."

In fact, blood carries vital elements to all the cells of the organism: oxygen, carbohydrates, proteins, vitamins, minerals, water, etc.

Without blood, the flesh would have no life.

The disciples were scandalized. Many left. Only those who understood remained and could affirm to Jesus: "**You have the words of eternal life.**"

Jesus was making a comparison between the biology of the human body and "spiritual biology." Just as the life of the flesh is in the blood, the life that exists in the Word of Jesus is in the Spirit.

Jesus had already called His Word "flesh." Now He called the Spirit that dwells in His Word "blood." Just a comparison. Like in a parable.

The Word used the flesh of the Son of Man as a vehicle. From a spiritual point of view, we can say that the flesh is the vehicle of the spirit. By analogy, everything that conveys the Spirit resembles the flesh. Besides the flesh (body) of the Son of Man, the Word is also conveyed through the Word. In this case, the Word itself is the flesh. Pay attention to the spiritual meaning of the words.

The bread is the Word of God.
The yeast is the doctrine of men.
The flesh is the Word of Jesus.
The blood is the Spirit that dwells in the Word of Jesus and gives life.

“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”

Some of the listeners didn't understand this and thought that "**eating the flesh**" meant eating the physical body. They were even more scandalized by God's previous prohibition against eating the blood of animals. Jesus explained to them separately that this physical flesh was useless, but that "**the words**" were the flesh, and the blood within the flesh was the Spirit that brought life.

Note also that the Word can be conveyed through gestures and attitudes, as in the episodes where Jesus washed the disciples' feet, multiplied the loaves and fishes to feed the multitudes, or during the Last Supper. The Word is also conveyed through the Bible, which, in this case, becomes flesh. But by drawing attention to his own flesh, Jesus gave a special meaning to this vehicle of the Word: neither that of food nor of cleansing, but that of salvation.

The Last Supper is a concrete gesture. The Holy Spirit is present when bread and wine are shared among the disciples. While it is a concrete gesture, it is also a Word that preaches sharing among believers in the message of Jesus and, consequently, in the Holy Spirit that accompanies it.

Just as the Holy Spirit is spiritually present in the Lord's Supper, the Holy Spirit also dwells and is present in the Word of Jesus, which, like the bread (body) and the wine (blood), nourishes and gives life to the believer who receives and shares it.

Like the bread that was broken and multiplied, the Word of Jesus was also shared and multiplied throughout the world.

Like the blood, the Word was poured out and spread by the disciples throughout the world. Like the blood, the Word leads to liberation from sins.

The Word brings the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit brings life.

When receiving the Lord's Supper in your congregation, pay attention to its message.

The Word of Jesus is not ministered only through words, but also through actions, and the Holy Communion, as well as Baptism and the "washing of feet," are also living Words of the Master to communicate something to us, to cleanse us, to nourish us, and to give us life through the Spirit.

YE HAVE HEARD THAT IT WAS SAID BY THEM OF OLD TIME

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BREAD AND MEAT

Read chapter 5 of Mathew.

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. Matthew 5.17.

As we saw earlier, Jesus calls the Word of God "**bread,**" and calls His own Word "**flesh.**" Both "**bread**" and "**flesh**" come from God, but there are some differences between them. These differences

may seem contradictory, but in fact they are complementary, and this change from "**bread**" to "**flesh**" is in God's plan.

BUT I SAY UNTO YOU
THE NEW COMMANDMENTS OF JESUS

Read Matthew 5:21-26.

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."

The lessons of the Sermon on the Mount clearly demonstrate the differences between the **"Bread"** (**"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time"**) and the **"Meat"** (**"But I say unto you..."**). The Word of God given to the prophets in the Old Testament has a legalistic, behavioral character, governing men's outward attitudes. The Word of Jesus, however, comes to govern hearts, extracting from the depths of man all the pernicious feelings that may motivate his outward attitudes. Let's look at other examples.

Read Matthew 5:27-30.

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

The difference is radical; however, note that both Words contain the same principle. They are not contradictory, but rather complementary. The same difference as bread and meat, but both serve as food.

Let us continue in Matthew 5:31-32.

"It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery."

Divorce was not an act recommended by the Law. However, when it was carried out (after the woman was repudiated), according to the Law, it should be formalized through a document. Jesus' Word exposes the iniquity that resides in the act of repudiation. Note how Jesus differentiates between "**fornication**" and "**adultery.**" If the woman has already committed the illicit sexual act, she is already an adulteress, and therefore, divorce or repudiation will not expose her to this. Jesus is concerned here with the woman who is not an adulteress but is nevertheless subject to being repudiated. If she is repudiated, she then exposes herself to committing adultery, also adulterating God's plan for marriage. When Jesus warns the man that by marrying the repudiated woman, he will be committing adultery (adultery and not illicit sexual relations), Jesus is warning that by doing so, this man will be preventing a possible reconciliation of this woman with her original husband. Jesus' concern is with the preservation of the family. He also aims to protect the woman from repudiation and leave her available for reconciliation. Note that "adultery" is a sin of the heart (just like looking at a woman with impure intentions). Note also that Jesus does not call a second marriage "illicit sexual relations." Illicit is synonymous with illegal, and therefore, second marriage is not illegal, it does not violate the Law. It does not violate the Law, but it is adultery, therefore sin, and as such needs to be avoided, and, if committed, needs to be confessed and forgiven (just like the "sin of looking").

Note that Jesus' Word does not contradict the Law, especially since Jesus does not comment on the Law. For Jesus, the "kingdom of God" takes place in the heart, and it is in this "kingdom" that His Word operates. Jesus' Word works in the heart of man so that the Law does not need to be applied.

Read Matthew 5:33-37.

"Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem;

for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."

When I read the word "oath," I usually think of that lying child who, because they are so discredited, needs to swear an oath to be taken seriously.

If someone needs to swear an oath to be believed, it's because there's a possibility that the person is lying.

Jesus is not changing the Law but preaching maturity in relation to it.

To a child, we say: "You shall not swear falsely." This is what Jesus calls "bread," and what the author of Hebrews calls "milk" (Hebrews 5:11-14).

To an adult, Jesus says: "**let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay**". This is what He calls "**meat,**" and what the author of Hebrews calls "**strong meat.**" Note the difference.

"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teaches you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil". Hebrews 5:12-14.

Continuing our study of the differences between bread and meat, open Matthew 5:38-42.

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth."

The Law given to Moses was characterized by impartiality, even prescribing penalties and punishments exactly equal to the offense. This is what Jesus calls "**bread.**" But in the age of Grace, there is something more important to do: to win your brother; so, Jesus gives us the "meat."

"But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away".

"That ye resist not evil", these words are so clear that they need no further comment. They are as clear as they are difficult to put into practice, especially when emotion (usually anger) is dominating our being. I can only recommend one thing: keep them. Memorize them (eat this "meat") and remember them in times of trouble. They are seeds that, if planted at the right time, will bear much fruit. You can be sure of that. Words of Jesus.

And in Matthew 5:43-48.

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy."

As Jesus himself says, this is a "**bread**" that is easy to digest: **"what reward have ye?"**, but Jesus wants us to be "**perfect,**" so he gives us the "**meat**".

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."

Or yet in Matthew 19:16-22.

In this passage, the young rich Jew asks Jesus, in his capacity as Teacher: "**what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?**" and Jesus gives him "**bread.**"

But this Jew felt **something was missing** and wanted more: "**what lack I yet?**" The "**bread**" was not enough to satisfy his hunger. Jesus then gives him "**meat**":

"If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me." A more meaningful word, but difficult for this young man to digest, and he leaves saddened.

EXCEPT YE EAT THE FLESH OF THE SON OF MAN, AND DRINK HIS BLOOD, YE HAVE NO LIFE IN YOU
THE PASSOVER

Read Exodus 12 and chapter 6 of John's gospel.

"For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.

"And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt."

"And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever.

The Lord's passing over Egypt, striking dead all the firstborn of those who had not sacrificed a lamb, eaten its flesh prepared by fire, and marked the doorposts and lintel with its blood, was one of the most significant divine events in the history of the Jewish people.

Note in verse fourteen that the Lord's command is that this day be celebrated as a solemnity, not only in the Age of Law, but also by **"ordinance"**.

This event is celebrated every year, even by Christians, but with a double meaning.

The Word ***Passover*** derives from Hebrew ***pasach*** or its nominal form ***pesach***, which means to **"pass over"** or **"to spare".**

The firstborn of the Israelites were spared from death. And this is related to the **sacrifice** of a lamb whose blood was shed and whose flesh was eaten.

The fact that Jesus **was crucified at Passover** is not a mere coincidence. Before beginning his ministry, Jesus had already been identified by John the Baptist as **the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.** John 1:29.

Jesus' sacrifice saves sinners from spiritual death, but not all.

Just as in the first Passover, only those who sacrificed the lamb, marking their doors with its blood, and eating its flesh were saved; so too is Jesus' sacrifice only for those who "eat his flesh and drink his blood." Not the material flesh, but His Word, which, like the flesh, carries the blood, in this case, the Spirit.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." John 6:53.

The flesh of the Son of Man was also offered as a **sacrifice**. The crucifixion of the flesh was the ultimate and definitive **Word left by the Son of Man**. Eating the flesh of the Son of Man also means accepting that the physical sacrifice of Jesus was offered for the remission of our sins. Calvary also brings us the message (Word) that our own carnal nature must be sacrificed. Accepting the cross means that our flesh (carnal nature) must die, so that by drinking the blood of Jesus (the Spirit that dwells in His Word) we may gain eternal life.

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." John 17:1-3.

Sometimes, when reading the Old Testament in isolation, we fail to fully understand God's Will. It may seem strange, at the very least, that God, being Omnipresent, Omniscient, and Omnipotent, needs the physical sacrifice of an animal (and the external demonstration of this fact through a mark of blood) to distinguish those who are of His people from those who are not. Moreover, we must remember that in the preceding plagues, God had distinguished the Israelites from the Egyptians without any prior mark or rite. But by requesting the celebration of Passover, the **LORD** was **PROPHESYING THE SACRIFICE OF JESUS,** and more than that, He was revealing to man, through material symbols endowed with spiritual meanings, all the elements involved in this sacrifice.

For the people of Israel, Passover primarily meant liberation and a new life.

They were enslaved in Egypt, probably because of a very serious sin (they sold Joseph into slavery to the merchants) and were aware of it (Genesis 42:21-22 and 44:16). God visited their iniquity but had mercy and freed them. Then they set out in search of the promised land. On this day they were "born again" as God's people, like Jesus, who resurrected.

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

YE SHALL RECEIVE POWER, AFTER THAT THE HOLY GHOST IS COME UPON YOU
THE PENTECOST

Read Exodus 12.
Exodus 19:1-6.
Exodus 23:14-19.
Exodus 34:18-28.
Leviticus 23.
Deuteronomy 16:1-17.

"Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening." Exodus 12:3-6.

"In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai." Exodus 19:1.

"Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread... and the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field." Exodus 23:15-16.

"And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end." Exodus 34:22.

"And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD." Leviticus 23:15-16.

The word "Pentecost" originates from Greek and means "fiftieth day." Pentecost is the first day of the Feast of Weeks, or the Feast of the Harvest of First Fruits, and occurs exactly fifty days after Passover. Since the first religious month has 30 days, and the second religious month (Zipph or Iyar) has 29 days, the fifty-day count corresponds exactly to the time elapsed between the separation of the Passover lamb (tenth day) and the arrival of God's people in the Sinai desert on the first day of the third month (Sivan). In Exodus 12, we see that the Passover takes place on the fourteenth day of the first Israelite religious month, Abib (Nisan). Because the Jewish religious calendar is lunar rather than solar, Passover will always fall on a Saturday, and, correspondingly, Pentecost will always fall on a Sunday. This is also one of the reasons why Christians observe Sunday instead of Saturday, since the Holy Spirit was sent by God on Pentecost Sunday. In some Anglican countries, this Pentecost Sunday is celebrated with particular joy and is called "White Sunday".

For the Israelites, the Feast of Weeks (so called because seven weeks pass between Passover and Pentecost) commemorates Moses receiving the Ten Commandments, as described in Exodus 19 and 20. For Jews, it signifies the beginning of the AGE OF LAW. But Jesus associated another meaning with Pentecost.

Luke 24:44-49.

"And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."

Read chapters 1 and 2 of Acts.

“It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

After the Resurrection, Jesus remained with his disciples for another forty days, giving them his final instructions. Shortly before ascending to heaven, Jesus prophesied the descent of the Holy Spirit, emphasizing an essential detail: the location. It was probably in the same "upper room" where Jesus had prophesied about the coming of the Comforter and the descent of the Holy Spirit that the manifestation of the Holy Spirit occurred.

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Acts 2:1-4.

Only after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit did the Apostles and disciples receive the anointing and power to take the Word of Jesus to the world. After this memorable Pentecost, the disciples began to speak in tongues and prophesy, and then Peter stood up, gave a speech, and converted 3,000 people, who were baptized. On this day of Pentecost, with the anointing of the Holy Spirit, the disciples became the Church, founded as the Body of Christ. It was on this day that the age of Grace began, just as in the time of Moses, it had been the beginning of the age of Law.

Read Acts 2:14-35 and Joel 2:28-32.

“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.”

This prophecy of Joel has two important peculiarities. The first is the meaning of the word **“flesh”**, which here, probably, is not used in the common sense of material flesh, but rather the spiritual **“flesh”** with the same meaning that Jesus used when referring to His Word. Therefore, the Spirit was not poured out on "**all people,**" but only on "**those who kept the Word of Jesus**":

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.” John 6.53

The second distinctive feature is God's declaration that His Spirit makes no distinction of sex. Not only sons, but also **daughters** will prophesy; not only on servants, but also on **handmaids** **"I will pour out My Spirit."** In this way, God is authorizing women's ministry in proclaiming the Word of God.

There is a passage in Paul's discourse in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 in which he says:

“Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.”

Those who use these verses to disqualify women's ministry forget to read the context of this letter, in which Paul was severely admonishing the believers (men and women) of the Corinthian church because of the confusion that had arisen in their services, where there was no order, and everyone wanted to speak at the same time.

It is likely that those women whom Paul commanded to be silent were not discussing edifying or spiritual topics but perhaps only talking about matters unrelated to the worship of the Lord. Paul then alludes to a commandment of the Law (even though he was already in the age of Grace) to avoid murmuring during worship (and this applies not only to women, but also to men).

Let us not confuse the things of the Law with the things of Grace. As Jews, the first Christians needed to zealously follow the laws of Israel, and this included women remaining silent in the synagogues, but the Spirit was also poured out on **"the daughters and on the handmaids,"** and after this Pentecost, Grace prevails for us, not the Law, and may the Spirit of God powerfully use the voice of our sisters for the edification of the Church and for the propagation of the Gospel of God.

MY TIME IS NOT YET COME
THE FEAST OF THE TABERNACLES

Read John 7:1-13.

“My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready.”

One of the least understood aspects of Jesus' Word is this passage about the Feast of Tabernacles. His "brothers," perhaps even knowing that Jesus was avoiding Judea because some Jews were already plotting to take his life, encouraged him to go to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles. Note that it was his "brothers," not his disciples, who gave him this idea.

Jesus replies that the time of "His time" had not yet come. It is generally thought that Jesus was referring to the time of his crucifixion. Jesus tells his brothers that he will not go, but as soon as they leave, Jesus secretly goes to Jerusalem and goes straight to the temple, where he begins to teach. For those who read superficially, this passage leaves the idea that Jesus was a liar, saying one thing and doing another. And, after all, even after going up to Jerusalem, he boldly goes to the temple and begins to teach the doctrine of God, and, at this moment, nothing happens to him.

To fully understand what happens in this episode, we need to learn a little about what the Feast of Tabernacles was and what it prophesies.

Let's go back to the Bible then to:

Exodus 23:14-19.
Exodus 34:18-28.
Leviticus 23:33-44.

“And ye shall keep it a feast unto the LORD seven days in the year. It shall be a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month.” Leviticus 23:41.

The harvest festival takes place at the end of the Jewish religious year, which roughly corresponds to September or October in our calendar. It is also called the Feast of Tabernacles. It can be said that it is so-called because the Jews, when celebrating this festival, lived in tents, by order of the LORD himself. But the word Tabernacle is more commonly associated with the house of the LORD, where the offerings were consecrated, where the priests led worship to God, and where the objects of the LORD were housed, such as the Ark of the Covenant, the Tablets of the Law, and the candelabrum, among others. We can also, without fear of error, translate the word “Tabernacle” into spiritual language as “Church”.

The Feast of Tabernacles or Harvest Festival, which occurs at the end of the religious year, would then be the "Feast of the Churches." It was celebrated for seven days, and in this festival, which is a "perpetual statute," the participants were to take fruits from leafy trees and rejoice in the LORD.

Let's now read chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation.

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

I have heard from theologians several interpretations concerning the message of the Spirit of Jesus to the seven churches of Asia.

Some accept that each letter is specific to the local church to which it is addressed, containing biblical teaching but lacking a prophetic tone referring to the history of the Church of Christ itself.

Some see these messages as prophecies that would accompany the historical process of the Church of Jesus. From this perspective, the letter to the Church in Ephesus would be a message to the early Church in the first moments after Pentecost. The letter to the Church of Smyrna (which means bitterness or suffering) would be a message to the persecuted Church, before the official recognition of Christianity by Emperor Constantine. It would be successively like this, passing through the medieval Church, the Church of the Reformers, until the last Church, Laodicea, which would be the Church of today.

Some interpret these messages as prophecies for different religions that profess Jesus Christ. In this case, for example, the letter to the Church in Thyatira, which allowed Jezebel to seduce God's servants and worship idols, would be a prophecy directed to the Roman Church. The letter to the Church of Sardis, which states "**you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead,**" would be a prophecy to spiritualist religions that accept Jesus but prefer to follow mediumistic instructions.

It is not the scope of this work to defend this or that interpretation, for **“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”**

What does the Feast of Tabernacles have to do with Revelation? Let's see:
We associate the Feast of Tabernacles with the Feast of the Churches.
There were seven days of feasting. There were seven Churches exhorted.
The Feast of Tabernacles was associated with the harvest. We know the associations Jesus made between the Kingdom of God and sowing, fruit-bearing, and harvesting (see, for example, chapter 13 of Matthew or chapter 15 of John).
Revelation itself is the prophecy about the return of Jesus, when He will "harvest His Churches." In this case, just as Passover is a prophecy about the sacrifice of the Lamb of God; and the Feast of the First fruits is a prophecy about the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost; the Feast of the Harvest or of Tabernacles (ordained as a perpetual statute) is also a prophecy about the return of Jesus, when He will harvest His Churches.

Understanding this, we can also understand Jesus' statement in John chapter seven, when invited by his brothers to the Feast of Tabernacles, saying:

“My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready.”

In saying this, Jesus was not referring to that specific celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, nor to His crucifixion, but rather to His Second Coming, which was precisely being prophesied by this very feast.

THE QUOTED AND FULFILLED PROPHECY

Read chapter 4 of Mark, then Isaiah chapter 6, and John chapter 12.

“Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, <u>when he saw his glory, and spake of him</u>”. John 12:39-41.

“Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.” Isaías 6:9-10.

“Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they are a rebellious house.” Ezekiel 12:2

Chapter 6 of the book of Isaiah contains the prophetic passage most frequently quoted by Jesus during his earthly ministry and in Revelation. This passage is mentioned every time Jesus concludes his teachings by saying:

“Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

Matthew 11:15
Matthew 13:9
Matthew 13:16
Matthew 13:43
Mark 4:9
Mark 4:18
Mark 4:23
Mark 7:16
Mark 8:18
Luke 8:8
Luke 14:35
John 5:25
John 8:47
John 10:27
Revelation 2:29
Revelation 3:13
Revelation 3:6
Revelation 13:9

Or in a more explicit way:

“He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.” Mathew 19:12

It might seem strange to see Jesus, the Son of God, a member of the Holy Trinity, quoting the “prophet Isaiah” or the “prophet Ezekiel.” In fact, Jesus was quoting the Word of the “Lord.” In verse 41 of chapter 12, John lets us glimpse that this “Lord” seen by Isaiah would be the “Lord Jesus” himself and, probably, also the same “Lord” quoted by Ezekiel.

Jesus had already prophesied to his Old Testament prophets and, during his ministry, reiterated several times that his Word was not for everyone. Only for those who, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, had the capacity to understand it and the willingness to keep and obey it. The parable of the sower deals precisely with this.

THEREFORE SPEAK I TO THEM IN PARABLES

Read Matthew 13:10-17.

“But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.”

Throughout our study, we have come to see that the Word of Jesus is not expressed in human language but in spiritual language.

It is as if there were a need for an interpreter to translate spiritual truths to the level of human understanding. If we analyze it well, we really do have this interpreter: the Spirit of Truth, promised and sent by Jesus, to enlighten the elect of His Grace.

“If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” John 14:15-17

Understanding the Word of Jesus is not for everyone, but only for those who are blessed by the Spirit of truth. Loving Jesus and keeping his commandments are prerequisites for the action of the Spirit of truth. Jesus had already made this clear on several occasions. For example, speaking to the Pharisees:

“Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.” John 8:43-44.

Or, responding to the disciples who remained after He had spoken to them about eating His own flesh:

“Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.” John 6:65.

Or, thanking the Father for His disciples:

“I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them”. John 17. 6 a 10

The spiritual meaning of the Word is the perception of the one who is contemplated by the Spirit. This happens because the Word has not only a material aspect but also a dynamic, living message that transcends the world's language. For this reason, the Word of God has also manifested itself to man

through symbolic material elements, which carry important and profound messages from the Lord. These symbols materialize spiritual truths not only in a tangible, visible way but also in a multidimensional way, so that the poverty of our vocabulary cannot restrict God's message.

In this way, we learn that the water that quenches thirst and becomes an eternal spring is the Word that converts, just as it was presented to the Samaritan woman (John 4:13-42).

Similarly, the water that washes is the Word that cleanses, just as it was presented to the disciples when Jesus washed their feet (John 13:8 and John 15:3).

The bread is the Word of God that nourishes and gives eternal life. Matthew 4:4 and John 6:33.

The leaven is human doctrine added to the Word of God. It has no nutritional value; it only diminishes its consistency and pleases the eye. Exodus 12:19 and Matthew 16:6.

The meat is the Word of Jesus. Like the bread, which is the Word of God, the meat also nourishes and gives eternal life. The crucial difference between bread and meat is that the latter contains the sacrifice of Jesus that accompanied the teaching of this Word. John 6:51.

The blood is the Eternal Life, and the Spirit brought by the Word of Jesus, poured out on us after His sacrifice. John 6:56 and 63.

The spiritual meaning of Baptism is a little more complex.

HE THAT BELIEVETH AND IS BAPTIZED SHALL BE SAVED

Read Mark 16:14-18.

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”

Baptism is not a privilege exclusive to Christians. Before John the Baptist, Jews used to baptize "proselytes," or people from other nations who converted to Judaism. This act was performed immediately after circumcision. The baptism of the Jews was practiced by John the Baptist as a marker of a new life after repentance of sins. Baptism was confirmed and recommended by Jesus, and today it is universally administered by his disciples worldwide. But what is baptism? And what is its spiritual significance?

Read Matthew 28:18-20.

“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

In verse 18, Jesus highlights the link between the authority given in heaven and on earth. Water baptism is, therefore, a sacrament, that is, an act ordained by Jesus that serves as a link between earthly authority and heavenly authority; between the physical and spiritual worlds. Water baptism signifies everything that connects earthly man to the Spirit of God. It is not merely a ritual, but a spiritual act performed with a material element.

And the commands are these: **“preach the gospel to every creature”** and **“baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”** but how is this achieved? Not merely with a water ritual (because, as we have seen, water is the Word that quenches thirst, washes, and converts), but **“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you”.** The consequence? **“and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”**

If we understand the phrase **“baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”** as an **explanatory prayer**, then baptizing means **preaching the Word**. Not only preaching in the name of Jesus, but **primarily teaching to keep the Word of Jesus**. If you teach a brother to **keep the Word of Jesus**, you are baptizing him in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, because **water is the Word**, and the Spirit, to act, **does not need physical water**, but the **living water** that is given to us by Jesus. **This is the true water that baptizes.**

Similarly, being baptized means accepting the Word. We have concrete evidence of this relationship in Acts 2:41.

“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”

Spiritual baptism occurs when a believer accepts the Word of Jesus, which is the **"living water."** The subsequent water ritual will materialize, in physical sight, something that has already happened in the spiritual life.

“If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” John 4:10-14.

The concept that man's connection to God, which occurs in baptism, happens before the physical ceremony was also left to us by Jesus:

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Matthew 16:18-19.

This Word of Jesus has been interpreted in various ways. The consensus is that Jesus used it to grant the church of Jesus the authority to determine the post-mortem destiny of incarnate souls. However, the temporality of determination is not clearly defined. One could interpret that what the apostle determined would happen automatically in the kingdom of heaven. It would be a true power granted. But the apostle could have been uttering a prophetic Word, that is, prophesying something that was yet to happen. One could also interpret that what the apostle determined had already happened in the Kingdom of Heaven, that is, he would only be the spokesperson for the Kingdom of Heaven. But nothing prevents all three possibilities from being true.

Is ceremonial water baptism then merely symbolic? Quite the contrary. The ceremony of water baptism is a **non-verbal Word**, and, like all Words, it carries a **Truth** and a **Spirit** that bring **Life**. To baptize in water means to teach how to **keep Jesus' Word**. The one who baptizes a new believer does not finish their work there. In fact, they are **committing themselves**, before God, to teach this believer to keep the Word of Jesus. Similarly, parents who baptize a child **commit themselves**, before God, to keep them on the path of the Lord. Remember this every time you attend a baptism ceremony and remember John the Baptist proclaiming Jesus and turning the hearts of parents to their children.

And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. Luke 1:17

THE TWO BAPTISMS

Read chapter 3 of the Gospel of Matthew.

“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,
“And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.”

From the words of John the Baptist, we can clearly see that there are at least two types of baptism. Jesus also left us this concept. Read Acts 1:1-11.

“For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.”

JOHN BAPTIZED WITH WATER
THE BAPTISM WITH WATER

“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” Isaiah 40:3.

Water baptism is baptism for repentance from sins. It is the baptism that prepares the way for the Lord. It represents a change of direction. It is the believer's affirmation of their recognition of the

need for a change of life. It is the voice crying out in the wilderness of sins: "Jesus, I need you! Straighten my highway! Lead me to God!"

In water baptism for repentance of sins, the believer opens the doors of their heart to receive the instruction of the Spirit. They are not yet prepared. They do not have, nor do they keep, the Word of the Savior. But they are preparing themselves for this and turning away from their evil ways. Water baptism marks the beginning of the walk with Jesus. But it only marks the beginning.

Jesus was also baptized in water by John the Baptist. This also marked the beginning of his ministry and the occasion for the confirmation by the Holy Spirit and by God himself, before men, of the undeniable truth: Jesus Christ is the beloved Son of God.

The spiritual meaning of Baptism in water, then, is that of initiation, that is, accepting the Word ministered.

Read Luke 3:1-22.

"John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable. Luke 3:16-17.

"**Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.**" Luke 3:21-22.

Read chapter 3 of the Gospel of John.

"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John 3:3.

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:14-16.

The first Baptism is the Baptism of faith. It is done by water and the Spirit. Whoever does not have faith does not enter the kingdom (government) of God. The bronze serpent Moses raised in the desert is extremely significant (Numbers 21:4-9). Without faith, salvation is not possible, and the necessary faith is faith in the power of Jesus. It is necessary to have faith and believe that Jesus' sacrifice was made for our salvation. It is necessary to have faith and believe that our eternal life was purchased by this act of love for us. It is necessary to have faith and believe that we belong to Jesus. It is necessary to have faith in Jesus as the Lord. But having faith is different from simply believing. True faith must be tested and approved. Faith must receive the Baptism of fire. It is not man who receives the Baptism of fire, but his faith.

Being baptized in water means accepting the Word and the Spirit that works through it, for conversion.

BUT YOU WILL BE SALTED WITH FIRE
THE BAPTISM OF FIRE

Read Luke 12:35-52 and Mark 9:49-50.

"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.."

"I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled? But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"

In the same way that Jesus, as the Son of Man, received the Baptism of water, He also received the Baptism of fire.

Let's draw some parallels.

Jesus' Baptism of water was performed at the beginning of His ministry.

For the believer, the Baptism of water represents the beginning of Jesus' ministry in their life.

Just as it was not Jesus' Baptism of water that saved the world, neither does the Baptism of water save the believer.

In prophesying about the Baptism of fire that He would receive, Jesus was obviously referring to His crucifixion.

By being crucified (the Baptism of fire), Jesus gave His own life for the salvation of those who would be His. By buying us with His blood, Jesus became Lord.

For the believer, the Baptism of fire represents the surrender of their life to Jesus, who becomes Lord, thereby conferring upon the believer Salvation, or eternal life.

During his time on earth, Jesus never administered water baptism. This is a task for the disciples. This parenthesis recorded in John 4:2 is extremely revealing.

Water baptism marks the beginning of the Holy Spirit's work. It is administered by the disciple, as it is the disciple's function to bring other disciples to Jesus. Water baptism does not confer salvation and is not administered by Jesus. Upon receiving water baptism, a person is invested with the condition of a disciple of Jesus. He is called, but has not yet been chosen.

The baptism of fire is administered by Jesus at the exact moment when the believer, already worked on by the action of the Word and the Holy Spirit, truly surrenders his life, by faith, to the service of the Lord. He ceases to be a disciple and becomes a servant. By giving up his life and his will, by faith, the believer receives the mark of the Lord, that is, the baptism of fire, which truly confers salvation. Just as Jesus became Lord when he was crucified, so too, by giving up his own life, the disciple becomes a servant, overcoming death through faith in Jesus and receiving from Him the grace of eternal life.

“For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.” (Chapter 3 of the Gospel of John).

The Baptism of Fire involves more than just faith.
It involves the judgment of light.
He who thinks he has faith but practices evil deeds does not receive the Baptism of Fire.
Approved faith is that which practices truth.
“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” John 17:17.

Without losing sight of Jesus' explanation that baptizing means "making disciples," in the same line of thought, being baptized in fire means receiving the gift of ministering the Word. This is what happened, for example, in Isaiah 6:1-13; Jeremiah 1:1-10; Acts 2:1-41; Acts 9:1-30.

Note in all these examples the divine intercession in man, not so that he may convert, but so that he may begin to minister the Word. With the exception of Saul of Tarsus, who at the same time as he converts to Jesus also begins to minister His Word, all the others already had a God-fearing heart, but received the baptism of fire with the explicit purpose of carrying the Word of the Lord. After the baptism of fire, Isaiah and Jeremiah begin to prophesy. After the baptism of fire, Peter rises up and begins to lead the church. After the baptism of fire, the ministers of the Word begin to speak in tongues.

Baptism means "to minister the Word, teaching how to keep it."
Being baptized in water means "to receive the Word and the Spirit for conversion."
Being baptized in fire means "to be commissioned by God to minister the Word."

Biblical evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit exists both in water baptism, performed by men, and in fire baptism, performed by Jesus.

Historically, the greatest controversies in the Church of Christ have always concerned the administration of baptism: baptism by immersion, baptism by sprinkling, the requirement of "speaking in tongues" as essential evidence of baptism, and other similar issues have always had the power to divide the Church. It is necessary to "dematerialize" the act of baptism to understand its true spiritual meaning. We will then have biblical elements to have some idea of what happens in spiritual life when someone is baptized, whether in water or in fire.

THEREFORE SPEAK I TO THEM IN PARABLES

Read Matthew 13:34-35; Mark 4:33-34, and Psalms 78:1-8.

The use of parables to convey the Word only confirms Jesus' wisdom and his consideration for the humble in spirit and for children. Those who are only interested in the literal meaning and form reject the message conveyed by the simplicity of the story. On the other hand, those who reason by comparison and humbly open their understanding to the Holy Spirit learn to keep the true messages in their hearts. Let's look at some more parables.

Read Matthew 13:31-33. The parables of the mustard seed and the yeast.

The Word of Jesus and the kingdom of heaven are contagious. They spread and grow uninterruptedly, propagating throughout the world, reaching everyone and sheltering those who nestle within their branches.

Let's continue in Matthew 13:44-46. The parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl.

Whoever finds the kingdom of heaven (even while on earth) will not exchange it for anything. They invest everything they have in it, and if it is necessary to abandon everything to achieve it, this exchange is made with a heart overflowing with joy.

John 16:25-33

“These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father.”
“At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.”
“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”

THE GOOD PART

Read Luke 10:38-42

“Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

Mary was simply listening to the Word of Jesus.
Only one thing is necessary: the Word of Jesus. Nothing more.
This is the good part; you can live from this and by this, without needing anything else.

The Word of Jesus is Truth.
The Word of Jesus sets free.
The Word of Jesus is living water.
The Word of Jesus quenches thirst and becomes a spring welling up to eternal life.
The Word of Jesus is bread.
The Word of Jesus nourishes.
The Word of Jesus is seed.
The Word of Jesus germinates, grows, and bears fruit.
The Word of Jesus is like leaven.
The Word of Jesus leavens and multiplies.
The Word of Jesus is blood.
The Word of Jesus brings life.
The Word of Jesus is flesh.
The Spirit dwells in the Word of Jesus.
To worship in truth means to worship through the Word of Jesus.
The Truth is the Word that sets free.
The Living Water is the Word that quenches thirst and becomes a spring welling up to eternal life.
The Living Water is the Word that cleanses.
The Seed is the Word that germinates, grows, and bears fruit.
The Leaven is the Word that leavens and multiplies.
The Bread is the Word that nourishes.

The Blood is the Spirit of the Word that gives life.
The Flesh is the Word of sacrifice that redeems from carnal sins.
To worship in truth means to live by the Word of Jesus.

GUARDA OS MANDAMENTOS

Matthew 19:16-30.
Mark 10:17-22.
Luke 18:18-23.

"**And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."**

This young man kept the commandments of God's Law given through Moses. He had never killed anyone, never committed adultery (not even in thought?), never given false testimony, and honored his parents. But did he truly love his neighbor as himself?

"**What lack I yet?**"

His conscience was weighing on him. Something was missing, but it was difficult to admit. He was still bound to the material world. How could he be freed? There was only one way, and it was right in front of him! Looking at him. Loving him. Ministering His Word: Jesus.

THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY

Read Matthew 7:13-23.

Some people mistakenly believe that personal salvation is linked only to service rendered in Christian doctrine.

Some disciples rejoiced in the power emanating from their hands. Power that did not even belong to them, in fact. They prophesied, spoke in tongues, healed, cast out demons, and performed miracles. The Spirit did great things through their hands.

But this is not a reason for joy, nor confirmation of salvation.

Do you say, "Lord, Lord"?

Do you do the will of the Father who is in heaven?

Are you a ravenous wolf in sheep clothing?

Jesus accepts the repentant sinner and forgives sins. But He does not accept sin, since sin itself implies separation from God.

Beware of the temptations of the world.

Beware of small things.

"Depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Matthew 5:27-32.
Mark 9:42-48.

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell."

Where do your eyes wander?
Where do your hands wander?
What are you doing in your heart?
What is your intention?

Iniquity is not only done through outward gestures. It can exist in the heart, even if the disciple is performing miracles in the world. The true fruit is what comes from the heart.

Whoever thinks they are contributing to the kingdom of God with external spiritual manifestations, but harbors iniquity inwardly, is deceiving themselves. They are a ravenous wolf.

The true kingdom of God is in the heart.

The true kingdom of God is His rule over your heart.

HE THAT IS ABLE TO RECEIVE IT, LET HIM RECEIVE IT.

Read Matthew 19:3-12.

“For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.”

When the disciples concluded that marriage was not advisable, Jesus clarified that this concept was not for everyone, but only for those capable of receiving it.

Whoever is willing to serve the Lord in celibacy must truly become a "eunuch"; perhaps not literally, but figuratively.

But this is really difficult. It goes against human nature.

If you do not deny your human nature, don't worry: sex is a blessing when practiced according to God's will.

But if you renounce the flesh for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, then you are privileged. For this is not for everyone.

Read John 8.1-11

“Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.”

Jesus, as the Son of Man, understands human vicissitudes and the illusions that pass through the minds of those who are unaware of the essence of his Word.

Therefore, Jesus did not condemn the one who had been judged guilty by men.

He did not welcome her into his arms, nor did he condone her sin. On the contrary, he sent her away with a specific command.

“Go, and sin no more” is very different from **“Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.”** (Mark 10:14)

Is it worth trading the Lord's approval for fleeting pleasure, which most of the time is nothing more than an illusion shrouded in remorse and suffering?

Do you know the price of sin?

John 8:21-51.

“Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come.

“I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.”

“Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.”

“Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?”

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.”

The price of sin is death!

Don't be a slave to sin.

Don't live in adultery. Not even in thought.

Don't deceive yourself into thinking this isn't a sin.

Your reasons won't convince Jesus.

Jesus can free you from this slavery. But the first step is yours.

Repent. Pray. Ask for the Savior's intervention.

And keep His Word. This is the way.

John 17:1- 3.

“As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.” John 17:2.

Jesus has authority over all flesh. Meditate on this.
Man does not have authority over his own flesh. On the contrary, the flesh dominates and directs man.
Unless the power of Jesus intervenes in this process.
Don't think that you can abandon sin on your own. That's utopia.
But with Jesus and His Word kept in your heart, this can happen.
Because He has authority over the flesh.

Read Isaiah 40:1-8 and John 3:1-21.

“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.”

“All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.”

“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.”

The source of sin is the heart of man. Outward gestures reflect what is happening in the heart, but even if these gestures do not materialize, the presence of sin in the heart continues to distance man from God.
The heart that harbors sin has no room for love. The lust of the flesh prevents the first two commandments from being obeyed in their fullness. When it prevents man from loving, sexual desire distances man from God, transforming itself into sin.
If you are looking at someone with impure intentions in your heart, you are not seeing in this person a brother or sister, but only an attractive body. Sexual attraction obscures spiritual love. If you are sexually attracted, you are not truly loving your brother, only coveting his body.
A full life in the Word of Jesus allows man to free himself from his sins. Jesus being present in the heart expels impure intentions and exercises authority over the believer's flesh. Those who are firmly grounded in Jesus literally become eunuchs, since they love the spirit and not the body of their neighbor, who is now considered a brother or sister. In doing so, they leave no room in their hearts for lust, and when it appears, it only serves as a reminder of true love, which must be practiced and resumed immediately.

“Thou shalt not commit adultery” is a commandment to be followed by those who cannot live the fullness of the two main commandments, because whoever loves God with all their heart, with all their soul, with all their understanding, and with all their strength, and their neighbor as themselves, automatically does not commit adultery (not even in thought). Whoever loves does not have impure intentions in their heart and does not commit adultery.
If the feeling is born of the flesh, it is nothing more than flesh. It is destined to wither and die like grass. Whoever is born of the flesh is flesh and does the works of the flesh. Whoever lives within carnality needs to be born again. Born of water (The Word) and of the Spirit, to have in their heart only the dominion of the Spirit. Whoever lives with the Spirit is spirit and does the works of the Spirit. This one comes to the light, for their works are done in God.
Read Chapter 7 from Proverbs, Matthew 19:3-12, and Genesis 2.21-25.

ONE FLESH

“Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”

Have you ever stopped meditating on what marriage is?
There is no better definition than this: **one flesh**.

Marriage is not a union of spirits. The spirits in Jesus are free and can only aspire to a permanent bond with the Lord and with the body of Christ. Marriage is a union of flesh.

In the beginning, Adam was one. God separated his own rib to serve as a companion. Flesh separated from flesh and reunited through marriage: **one flesh**.

They are no longer two. What was previously not permitted for two continues to be so. But marriage transformed two into one. And the two, who are now one, can do together what is permitted only for one. If they separate, they cease to be one and can no longer do together what is permitted only for one flesh.

WHAT THEREFORE GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER, LET NOT MAN PUT ASUNDER

"But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." Matthew 5:32.

"Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery. Matthew 19:9

Recorded twice by Matthew, these slightly different instructions complement each other: the first emphasizes how unjustified divorce exposes the wife to adultery, and the second instruction focuses on the adultery of the husband who, after divorcing, marries another woman.

Marriage makes a man and a woman one flesh. Any sexual relationship outside of this one-flesh relationship is considered illicit (forbidden). Illicit sexual relations (and not adultery, which can be done with a look) dissolve this one-flesh relationship, insofar as it involves a third element (another flesh). Since marriage is defined as one flesh, the involvement of a third element breaks this relationship of fidelity and distorts the nature of the marriage. Adultery is not defined as a sexual relationship outside of marriage, but as any involvement outside the one-flesh relationship (with or without sexual contact), even if another "marriage" exists. The great lesson to be learned here is that marriage should be done under God's grace. The man who seeks a woman and forgets God in this process is following his own path. The man who seeks God first places himself in His hands so that He may provide the union that is right for Him. If God joins them together, it is difficult for man to separate them. If you are looking for marriage, consider this: you are looking for someone to become one flesh with you. Remember Adam; place yourself in God's hands and let Him do His work.

Read Genesis 6:1-9.

"That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years."

"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD."

There is a great difference between **"took them wives of all which they chose"**, and waiting for God's action in this regard.

In the book of Genesis, we have the account of all the problems that God found in man. The first was Adam and Eve's disobedience. The second was Cain's lack of love for God and for Abel. The third was man's carnality, which precipitated events and spoke louder than the Word of God.

Do not make decisions based on your carnal nature. Ask for God's guidance. Be still in Him, as Adam did, and let Him act. Have faith that He will "take a rib from you." The passions of the flesh are terrible advisors and only lead to misunderstandings, sin, and adultery. Be still in God. Walk with God. Do as Noah did.

TAKE UP HIS CROSS DAILY

Read Luke 18:24-30, Luke 9:22-27, and John 13:31-39.

"Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting." Luke 18:29-30.

“And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” Luke 9-23.

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” John 13:34-35**.**

Marriage is a natural institution of divine order. It is within marriage that the believer is tested and proves to God that he or she can live according to His Word. The intimate, daily coexistence provided by marriage, usually between people with completely different personalities and habits, challenges the Christian to continually put Jesus' commandments into practice. Words like "love", "do not judge", "do not condemn", "forgive", and "give" are essential for intimate coexistence and the continuity of any marriage.

Among the people in the circle of coexistence, the spouse is the closest neighbor, and therefore, the one to whom Jesus refers most when he says, "love your neighbor as yourself."

Any relationship based on the Word of Jesus will always be successful, especially if the following principles are kept in the heart:

“let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” Luke 9-23.

“Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.” Luke 6:36-38

“That ye love one another; as I have loved you” John 13:34

Those who base their existence on egocentrism, that is, those who believe the world should revolve around their own navel, will never be able to establish a healthy emotional relationship with anyone. The relationship established by marriage is one of unconditional love and giving, never of demands. Man has a natural tendency to center his goals on himself (egocentrism). It is against this tendency that Jesus fights when he says, "**deny yourself.**" Those who base their lives on the Word of Jesus center their existence on love for God, and its natural consequence, love for their neighbor. They renounce their own will for the love of their neighbor. A successful marriage does not happen when you expect your spouse to renounce everything to satisfy your desires, but when you renounce yourself to please your spouse out of love. Marriage is synonymous with renunciation. When spouses are more interested in themselves than in satisfying their partner, the marriage falls apart, the companionship ends, and the people separate. Whether or not the act is formalized, if there is no love and no renunciation, then there is no marriage.

Even if people are legally together (tolerating each other) on paper or at their address, the separation has already occurred in practice. What underlies the union between a man and a woman as one flesh is love. If there is no love, or even if there is hatred, there is no longer any union. This is what Jesus called the **“hardness of your hearts”.** Many couples, when they reach this point, find legal separation and the search for a new partner as the solution. When the relationship reaches this stage, even Moses permitted divorce. Simply seeking another partner is the seemingly easiest solution, but if the main problem, which is the **“hardness of your hearts”**, is not resolved, people can continue to marry as many times as they want, and the result will continue to be catastrophic. Jesus warns us that the separation of a couple is not God's plan, and that the formation of a new family is considered adultery (looking at someone's body with impure intentions in your heart is also adultery). Nothing is unforgivable in Jesus, but be aware that this is a sin that separates us from God.

The true solution to marital problems is obedience to the Word of Jesus. Those who are unwilling to deny themselves and renounce their lifestyle, their extra time, and their hours of sleep for the sake of their partner and children might be better off reaching the disciples' conclusion and discovering that "**it is not good to marry**" (especially for those who are already married). But since “**He that is able to receive it, let him receive it”**, many people will continue to struggle within one or more egocentrically based marital structures until they discover that Jesus is also the salvation for this.

Jesus also established a situation where the separation of the couple and the formation of a new family does not constitute sin: "**fornication**" (and not because of adultery in thought). No one is obliged to live with promiscuity, and in this case, separation is permitted by the Word of Jesus.

Jesus also speaks of **“left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake”** (God's command). In this situation, he does not speak of divorce, nor of forming a new family, but of ministry. These are quite specific situations; a biblical example is that of Moses and the apostles, who left everything by God's command for the testimony of the gospel.

But even better is communion when both spouses renounce everything to serve God. Marriages of this kind are richly blessed, and their common purpose brings the couple closer to God and to each other day by day.

SWEAR NOT AT ALL

Read Chapter 4 of James.

“When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee.” Deuteronomium 23:21-23

“Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.” Matthew 5:33-37

The future belongs to God. Pretentious is the man who promises as if he owned the world, and vows something for tomorrow that he cannot do today. Who guarantees that he will be alive tomorrow? He who promises acts as if he were omnipotent, certain of dominating the future. But everything is in God's hands, who can break man's "pseudo-omnipotence" with a snap of his fingers. We can even make plans for the future, but let us have the conviction that they will only come true **"If the Lord will".**

BLESSED

Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him. Psalms 2:11-12.

Read Matthew 5:1-12.
Read Psalm 119.

The phrase "Blessed are those who..." was frequently used by David in his Psalms, and for the Jewish people, it carries special meaning. "Blessed" literally means "happy," "successful," or "favored," but it's not used to express earthly good fortune or happiness; rather, it indicates spiritual happiness or bliss–the true joy that comes from a sincere relationship between man and God. One of the most beloved and memorized psalms by the Jewish people (Psalm 119 of David) begins this way. Be sure to read it. In its entirety, it can be summarized as:

“Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.” Psalms 119:2

In the New Testament, the word "blessed" comes from the Greek "makarios" (μακάριοι), meaning divine favor that results in profound inner peace and spiritual joy. In the Old Testament, the term "blessed," derived from the Hebrew words "barak" and "ashre," signifies divine favor that brings about gifts, empowerment, and prosperity.

“Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. Mathew 5:12.

Finishing describing the blessings, Jesus associated them with happiness (**“rejoice, and be exceeding glad”**).

Who doesn't want to be happy?

One of the most deeply rooted universal desires in human consciousness is the desire for happiness.

A child wants to be happy when they want to play.

A young bachelor wants to be happy when looking for a partner.

A mother wants to be happy when she conceives a child, and she also wants that child to be happy.

Similarly, God desires the happiness, or blessedness, of his children; and one of Jesus' missions on earth was precisely to teach humanity the path to happiness.

In fact, Jesus' first three commandments are intimately related to human happiness itself, as they speak precisely of loving God, loving one's neighbor, and loving oneself:

"**And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.**" Mark 12:29-31.

To love and to be happy are two intimately related states of mind.

Jesus commands us to love God, our neighbor, ourselves, and even our enemy, but have you ever stopped to think about what love is?

What does "to love" mean to you?

In the past, the definition of love was delegated to romantic poets, who sought to awaken this feeling in people through their rhymes.

Nowadays, psychology, neurolinguistics, and even biochemistry have satisfactorily defined love.

Love is an emotional state, or a state of mind characterized by a "feeling of well-being."

When person A loves person B, this means that the presence and attitudes of person B trigger in person A a series of psychic stimuli that culminate in the release of neurotransmitters (phenylethylamine, dopamine, endorphins, etc.) that stimulate the limbic pleasure centers of person A, producing in them a feeling of well-being, or happiness.

This means that God is deeply interested in man's happiness, so much so that Jesus, throughout his ministry, constantly exhorts man to love, love, and love; and the "blessings" are nothing more than a roadmap to happiness.

If you want to be happy, don't complicate your life by seeking worldly things. They don't bring real happiness.

Seek the Word of Jesus; this is the right path for us.

All the "blessings" are quite simple instructions, but they lead us to a more in-depth study of other parts of the Bible, whether in the Old Testament or in Jesus' own words later.

"... blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." Luke 11:28.

BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT: FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Matthew 5:3.
Isaiah 66:1-9.

"**Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.**" Isaiah 66:1-2.

In the first blessing, Jesus quotes God's Word (through Isaiah), using the term "poor in spirit," referring to the Word of God that describes His Majesty as the One who has the heavens as His throne and the earth as His footstool, and who looks upon the contrite (poor) man in spirit.

"Poor in spirit" (Greek: ptōchoi tō pneumati) describes a state of dependence and humility before God, akin to that of a humble beggar, recognizing God's Majesty and greatness.

In the remainder of His ministry, Jesus no longer uses this figure of speech, preferring the terms "humility" and "humble," and teaching parables about humble beggars.

The word "humble" derives from the Latin *humus*, meaning "ground" or "earth." From it, two derivations have been employed: *humiliare* (to humiliate someone) and *humilitare* (to humble oneself). "Humble" literally means "placed close to the ground" and is synonymous with "simple," "modest," "poor," "respectful," "submissive," and "mediocre." "humiliare" or "humilitare" are verbs that establish a relationship of inferiority of one party to another; being antonyms of "to exalt." In our language, "to humiliate someone" has a pejorative connotation, meaning "to degrade," "to shame," or "to debase" (to make someone feel ashamed or foolish); whereas "to humble oneself" has a more literal connotation, meaning "to place oneself underneath", "to submit oneself to another", "to make someone else's authority recognized or to acknowledge it" or "to make someone else respected or to respect another".

Jesus teaches us that **"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."** Jesus doesn't speak of "the poor," but rather of **"the poor in spirit**." It's not because a person is materially poor that they automatically have the kingdom of heaven. The better interpretation for this expression is **"the contrite, or the humble."**

Note also that most of the "blessings" promise happiness with the verb conjugated in the future tense: "**Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.**". and so for; however, the humble already possess the kingdom of heaven.

When Jesus speaks to us about the **“kingdom of heaven,”** we can understand Him in two ways. We can understand the **“kingdom of heaven”** as the future Paradise, in which case the **“poor in spirit”** are receiving a promise.

But we can also understand the **“kingdom of heaven”** as a state of mind, which, incidentally, has everything to do with the topic at hand: happiness and blessedness. In this case, the one who is “humble in spirit” is automatically blessed to the point of already living in the “kingdom of heaven.”

In practice, this is not difficult to understand.

Those who are **"poor in spirit"** are content with what God gives them and are not anxious or worried about tomorrow. They are happy, and theirs is the "kingdom of heaven."

Those who are **"poor in spirit,"** being satisfied with what God gives them, do not need to chase after worldly things and have time to seek God's Word. They are happy, and theirs is the "kingdom of heaven."

Those who are **"poor in spirit"** do not confront God with their own will and questions, but rather are submissive to Him and accept His instruction. They are happy, and theirs is the **"kingdom of heaven."**

But the Bible, and particularly the Word of Jesus, teaches us many other connotations about what it means to be **"poor in spirit"** in several passages. Let's see:

1. To be humble before God.

Read Isaiah 66:1-9.

“**Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.”** Isaiah 66 1-2.

What are we before God?
What do we have that we do not owe to Him?
What merit can there be in us that is not a gift from Him?
God is the eternal Creator. The Almighty. The absolute Lord.
We are nothing before God.
Do not be ashamed to tremble before His Word.
It is to the afflicted and downcast in spirit that God sends His gaze.

Do not be proud of yourself before God. Everything and absolutely everything that you have, that is, you owe to Him. He is your Creator.

This is the first step: To recognize that we are nothing, that we depend on and are indebted to the Almighty. To be humble in spirit before the Creator.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:3.

2. To be humble before others.

Read Luke 14:7-14.

“When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” Luke 14:7-11.

Being humble before God may not be so difficult if we are fully aware of God's attributes: Almighty, Omnipotent, Omniscient, and Omnipresent. It is a little more difficult to be humble before our brothers and sisters, who may not appear, during our interactions, to be so superior to us. The parable of the first place is by no means a malicious practical rule to be applied in our relationships with the world. Instead, it is a precious lesson teaching that God wants those who are humble in spirit, even before their brothers and sisters, to be close to Him, and who do not try to prevail over them.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5.3.

3. To be humble before the humble.

“Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.” Luke 14:12-14.

More difficult than being humble among brothers is being humble among the humble.

Inviting, serving, sharing, and living with people who are miserable, disabled, and marginalized by society; without exalting oneself before them, placing oneself on the same level or even below them, is a challenge that is all the greater the greater our pride, our selfishness, and our lack of vision that, for God, we all have the same value. It is also allowing our worldly and material perspective to obscure the spiritual qualities with which these humbler brothers and sisters of ours are often endowed, and for which we yearn and pray so much to God. Being humble in spirit among the humble is not just a relationship of exchanging material goods or services, but the recognition of one's neighbor as a brother or sister, contemplating their face with the true love that flows from the Creator himself.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:3.

Luke 16:19-31

“And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.”

By turning his back on Lazarus, the rich man was, in a way, digging a chasm between himself and the beggar. This enormous chasm, the difference in class, prevented Lazarus from receiving help for his material ills during his life. After death, it also prevented the rich man from being helped by Lazarus in his infernal torments. Learn from Jesus not to dig chasms.

To be humble in spirit is to descend to the level of the humble, to perceive their needs and, putting oneself in the place of one's brother, to apply Jesus' maxim:

“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.” Matthew 7:12.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:3.

4. To be humble in your own eyes.

Luke 18:9-17.

“Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

The Pharisee did not pray to God, but rather **“prayed thus with himself.”**

In his own eyes, the Pharisee considered himself an important figure, with just and upright ways, perfectly in accordance with God's will. In his own eyes, he considered himself superior to other men: robbers, unjust, and adulterers. Fasting and tithing were sufficient actions to please God and exalt him to a position of superiority.

Don't consider yourself a big deal.

Be humble even before yourself.

We are all sinners.

If you don't see this, ask God to open your eyes. Acknowledge your sins.

Don't stagnate in contemplating yourself in the mirror, trying to justify yourself to yourself. That's not the way.

The true way is the humility of spirit, which sets aside pride by recognizing the flaws and defects of one's own character.

Be truly humble in spirit.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:3.

5. Be humble in the face of evil

Read Matthew 5:38-48.

“But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.”

At first glance, it seems extremely difficult to follow Jesus' guidelines. This is if we let ourselves be carried away by the emotion of the moment.

But if we analyze the issue coldly and rationally, we will see that, for our own happiness, it is the best thing we can do.

An action leads to a reaction, and so on.

If we react to the wicked, they will react to us.

If we also attack them, they will attack us again.

But if, on the contrary, we turn the other cheek, the aggression may very well stop there, and we may even hear an apology the next day.

To be humble before the wicked is not to desire to prevail against them.

And believe it or not, this is the path to happiness. If we maintain aggression and hatred, they will continue, and later we will have to reconcile with this person and even ask for forgiveness for not having given a correct Christian witness. And if we maintain aggression and hatred in our hearts, how can we be blessed?

On the other hand, if we "turn the other cheek," we will be at peace with ourselves, and by not harboring aggression and hatred in our hearts, we can remain happy.

More than a commandment, the Beatitudes are practical instructions for life. A true "manufacturer's manual" that teaches us the best course of action in all situations. Not out of a whim of God, but out of His interest in our happiness.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:3.

6. To be humble before the Word.

Matthew 23:1-12

“The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

“Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” John 4:13-14.

To all those He calls, Jesus grants the faculty of ministering the Word.

Although the Word is not the exclusive privilege of anyone, but quite the contrary finds refuge in all of Jesus' followers, some people stand out in its teaching and dissemination. They are, as Luke called them, "**ministers of the Word**". Luke 1:2.

But just as the scribes and Pharisees deserved credit for preaching the Word of God, the ministers of Jesus' Word are respected men and sometimes even idolized for repeating the message so painfully left to us as an inheritance by Jesus.

But the Word has already been left to us. And it is complete. It needs no supplementation. Maybe, sometimes, just an explanation.

“But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.”

It is the minister's duty to minister only the Word of Jesus. This same Word that has already been given to us. Without adding or subtracting a single drop of the “i”.

“Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.”

Let no one consider themselves superior because they know or preach the Word. It is not the preacher who transforms, but the Spirit who dwells in the Word.

“Let no one consider themselves superior because they know or preach the Word. It is not the preacher who transforms, but the action of the Spirit who dwells in the Word.”

Preaching the Word is part of the Christian life. The preacher is simply serving God and serving others. Ministering the Word is rendering a service. The minister of the Word is, first and foremost, a servant.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:3.

7. Be humble like a servant.

Read Luke 22:24-30.
Mark 10:35-45.
Matthew 20:20-28.
Luke 12:35-48

“The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth”.

The relationship established between a servant and his master is necessarily one of humility.

To be humble is to recognize a superior will. It is to annul one's own will in favor of the will of the one who is considered master.

Whoever serves with an open heart is humble.

To serve with an open heart means expressing humility of spirit through actions.

To serve is to verbalize, through actions, this sublime blessedness that leads us to the kingdom of heaven.

Whoever serves their neighbor is humble in spirit before their neighbor.
Whoever serves the humble is humble in spirit before the humble.
Whoever serves the Word is humble in spirit before the Word.
Whoever serves their subordinates is humble in spirit before their subordinates.
Whoever serves God by doing His will is humble in spirit before God.

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” Matthew 7:21.

Being humble also means being a servant. And, paradoxically, there is real greatness in serving.

For us, the greatness of Jesus consisted in having come into the world to serve men with the Word of God. Had Jesus not taken the trouble to redeem us, we would not rightfully belong to Him.

God truly is the omnipotent Lord, and if it were His will, He would do all things necessary for the paradisiacal happiness of His children on Earth. But, in His infinite mercy, God preferred to grant man the privilege of being a servant, a collaborator in His Kingdom, an executor of His will.

If there is any greatness in man, it is the capacity to serve. If there is anything in man that makes him perfect and like God, it is the capacity to, out of love, give himself to his brother.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:3.

8. Be humble like a child

Matthew 18:1-4.

“Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

To be a child is to be simple.
It is to be humble.
It is to be dependent.

It is to not be the owner of the truth.
It is to recognize God as Father.
No one earns heaven through merit.
No one is indispensable in the kingdom of heaven.
No one is exempt from sin in such a way as to automatically enter heaven.
No one is perfect.
We are all sinners.
We all have our flaws.
We are all dispensable.
We are all dependent on divine mercy.
Don't seek to receive the kingdom of heaven through merit.
No one deserves paradise.
Don't seek the taste of victory for yourself.
Only Christ conquered sin.
Don't try to buy the kingdom of heaven with attitudes or works.
You cannot pay the price.
Join the line of beggars.
Join the line of the humble.
Join the line of those who plead for a crumb of divine mercy.
This crumb of mercy will become a banquet.
Only and solely through His mercy can we reach the kingdom of heaven.
And this is the only way.
To be humble beggars and mendicants; dedicated servants; dependent infants of the Father, this is the only coherent attitude we can take before the Supreme Creator of the entire Universe.

9. Be humble like Jesus.

Leia Matthew 11:25-30.

"All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

Even though everything has been handed to Him by the Father, Jesus does not boast about it; rather, He continues to exalt and thank the Lord of heaven and earth, who is responsible for His glory. At the same time, He makes it very clear that the Lord prefers to reveal His truths to the hearts of the "**babes,**" as opposed to the "**wise and prudent,**" who, in their pretensions, remain ignorant of God's truths.

If God seeks any value in man, that value is humility. He who empties himself is able to receive much, but he who is full of himself has no room for the Spirit of God. One of the themes Jesus most emphasized during his earthly journey was **humility**. Not only through His Word, but also through His ministry and His supreme sacrifice on the cross. Do not have any kind of pride. Pride tyrannizes us and hinders the action of the Spirit of God in the heart. Learn from Jesus to be humble and **" ye shall find rest unto your souls."**

"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones". Isaiah 57:15

BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN: FOR THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED

Matthew 5:4.
Read 2 Kings 17:7-23; and Isaiah 57:14-21.

"For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart."
"I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners."

Simply stating that people who mourn are blessed because they will be comforted would be demagogic rhetoric in the mouth of any speaker. But as with all blessings, Jesus had a powerful message to minister with this Word.

At first glance, the main figure in this beatitude is one who mourns. But the ability to mourn is an attribute of any human being, not necessarily implying any spiritual blessing. Everyone mourns or has mourned. Those who are mourning will be comforted, and those who are not mourning have already been comforted. Let us focus not only on the figure of the one who mourns, but also on the figure of the one who comforts, to assimilate this message.

Read chapters 14, 15, and 16 of John's gospel.

The first question to be answered, then, is: Who are those who weep?

"Do ye enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." John 16:19-22.

Those who are not of the world weep, and they grieve for the absence of the Redeemer's physical presence.

The **"Son of Man"**, as Jesus used to refer to his **physical body**, had the mission of being the vehicle of the Word on Earth.

Jesus' spirit was incorporated into the flesh and used it as a relational instrument with the world; so too the **Word**, or the **Logos**, incarnated in a human body, used it as an instrument for revealing the **Word of Jesus**, or the **Message of God**. This Word is always used by the Holy Spirit to work in the heart of the believer.

As he had prophesied, Jesus was handed over to men, abused, tortured, and crucified. With his body dead, the disciples were also left without the Spirit and without the Word. Without seeing Jesus, deprived of his Word and the Spirit that accompanied it, the disciples wept, deeply saddened.

If those who weep are those who are not of the world and suffer from the absence of Jesus, then the second question remains. Who is the Comforter?

Judas Thaddeus' question is fundamental to understanding Jesus' message regarding the Comforter:

"Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?"

Jesus replied:

"If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

Judas Thaddeus' question was answered in its entirety, with five points:

"If a man love me..."
Loving Jesus is a prerequisite, because whoever loves Jesus:

"...he will keep my words..."
Keeping Jesus' word is honoring God's will, and for those who do so:

"...and my Father will love him..."
God loves those who love Jesus and keep His Word, doing His will.

"...and we will come unto him..."

Then comes the Comforter (who is one with the Father and with Jesus) who proceeds from the **Word** and from **Love** (from God to man, and from man to God).

"...and make our abode with him..."
The Word of Jesus is the instrument used by the Holy Spirit to manifest the glory and love of God through those who love Jesus and keep His Word.

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." John 14:16-17.

The difference between those who love Jesus and those who do not is that those who love Him keep and understand His Word. Those who do not love Him (those who are of the world) do not keep His Word and are incapable of understanding His message. Jesus does not manifest Himself to the world, but rather to those who love Him and keep His Word. The manifestation of Jesus proceeds from His own Word.

"Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word." John 8:43.

"I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. John 17:14-21.

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."

The Comforter comes from the Word. Jesus also calls the Word "Truth." And the Holy Spirit, who acts through the Word, or Truth, is known as the Spirit of Truth.

The Comforter is the Spirit of Truth, who, through the Word, has two missions to fulfill on earth. The first is to lead the believer into all truth, reminding them of everything Jesus taught. The second mission is to convince the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment; this does not mean winning souls for Jesus, but rather exercising power over the world. The "world" is the set of those who do not believe in Jesus.

"And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." John 16:8.

The Greek verb **"elenxei"**, translated in the King James Version as **"reprove"**, is usually translated in other translation versions as **"convict"**. It also means "to bring to light", "expose", "convince", or "shame". Jesus subtly teaches that the Holy Spirit acts on the human **conscience**, enlightening the soul about its own sins, to establish self-judgment of its actions through Divine Justice.

"And they which heard it, being convicted by their **own conscience**, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst." John 8:9.

"Of sin, because they believe not on me;" John 16:9.

"This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." John 6:29.

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." John 3:36.

"I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." John 8:24.

Those who do not believe in Jesus' Word die in their sins. Through Jesus' Word, the Holy Spirit rebukes the "world" for the sin that condemns to death.

"Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;" John 16:10.

"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." John 12:48.

The “world” historically rejected Jesus and condemned Him to death, expelling the “Son of Man” from the earthly kingdom. The “world” can no longer “see” Jesus; however, Jesus left His righteousness, which is His Word that, as a living entity, will judge each individual on the last day through their own conscience.

“Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.” John 16:11.

“Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again. Luke 6:37-38.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” John 5:24.

“I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.” John 16:12-13

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” John 14:26.

The Word left by Jesus on Earth contains all the truth necessary and sufficient for the salvation of man. It does not contain all knowledge, because it is not through knowledge that man is saved, but through faith, through belief in I AM. The Word of Jesus is exceedingly profound and contains many messages even in a few words. This happens because the revelation of the Spirit is gradual and appropriate to the development of each human being. For this reason, we cannot ignore it but must remain in it. Guard it. Love it. Incorporate it into our lives. He who remains in the Word is the true disciple, and through the Word he will know the truth, and through it he will become free. It is through the Word that the Spirit of Truth acts, to sanctify man, and make him a dwelling place of God.

“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.”

“He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.” John 16:14

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.” John 16:20-21

Upon rising from Calvary, Jesus was conquering death.
Not only physical death, but also spiritual death.
By resurrecting his physical body, Jesus was giving the world visible proof of his life-giving power.
But more than resurrecting his physical body, Jesus also resurrected His Word, which represents the “body” of the Spirit of Truth. And His Word, alive and resurrected in the hearts of believers, continues to heal, to give life, to teach, to correct, to seek, to resurrect us and save us from our own perdition.

“I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.” John 14:18.

In this "blessing" delivered in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus was not delivering a generic teaching, but prophesying the sending of the Comforter to those who would suffer from His absence and know how to seek Him through His Word.

“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.”

“Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.” John 16:24

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” John 16-33

The Comforter is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father.

Jesus went to the Father. Everyone is sad and disconsolate. To comfort us, Jesus has already sent us the Comforter, who (like His Word) proceeds from the Father.

The Comforter brings us joy that is not taken from us, and (like the Word of Jesus) at the same time leads us to the truth.

The Comforter is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, and dwells in the Word of Jesus.

In the Word of Jesus dwells the Spirit of truth, who, in the absence of the Redeemer's physical presence, comforts us, brings us joy, and leads us to the truth.

BLESSED ARE THE MEEK:
FOR THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH.

Mathew 5:5.
Read Chapter 37 of the Psalms.

“But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.” Psalms 37:11.

When Jesus was sent to Earth to transmit the Word of God, he already had a path prepared. Many lessons and commandments had already been transmitted to men and only needed to be remembered. By saying, **“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth”**, Jesus made David's Word His own, confirming it as God's message.

Psalm 37 contains a message of faith and extraordinary dependence on God. It speaks of peace among men, detachment from material possessions, the happiness of those who wait and rest in the Lord, and the salvation of God's people. It was sung by someone who was truly blessed by God. A pastor who, in his adolescence, faced a giant warrior and overcame him through the faith he had in the Lord. Someone who spent his life praising God became the proclaimed king of the Jews and, as a warrior, won countless battles for the chosen people. A person dear to God's eyes who also had the privilege of serving Him by ministering His Word.

But the message about “**Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth**” had already been preached, and people had places to find it. Jesus did not insist on this message because his mission went far beyond that. It was necessary to bear witness to true life; to the kingdom of God; to the kingdom of heaven. For Jesus, inheriting the earth was not the most important thing, but inheriting heaven. And in this spirit, he continued his message.

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF HISTORY

Read Exodus chapters 1 through 18.
Read Numbers 21:4-9.
Also read Joshua 6:1-21.

An interesting fact to note in the sequence of blessings is that, in a way, they go back to the history of the Israelites. Once slaves of Pharaoh, the Israelites were necessarily humble. Servants who did not rebel and waited on the LORD. For them, then, the first beatitude: **“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”**

Over time the abuses increased, God's people began to suffer, and so to speak, began to weep. For them then the promise: **“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”** For the Israelites enslaved by Pharaoh, the comforter sent was Moses, who, guided by God in his actions, led His people out of Egypt, guiding them through the desert toward the promised land. However, even with so many divine manifestations, the Israelites regretted following Moses, and tired of wandering in the desert, they blasphemed against God, disobeying His will on several occasions. Not all then inherited the land, and only the new generation, which did not long for slavery, was allowed to enter the promised land. Then: **"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."**

During their slavery in Egypt, the Israelites also suffered countless persecutions and abuses. Hunger and thirst for justice were abundant among them. On their way through the desert, they then encountered the fourth blessing:

BLESSED ARE THEY WHICH DO HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS: FOR THEY SHALL BE FILLED.

Mathew 5:6.
Read Genesis chapters 37 through 50.
Read Exodus chapters 1 through 20.
Read Deuteronomy chapter 6.

"And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us." Deuteronomy 6:25.

By serving a four-hundred-year sentence as slaves to Pharaoh, figuratively speaking, the Israelites were reaping what they had sown by selling Joseph into slavery and lying to Jacob.

The seven years of plenty came to everyone, but only Joseph was told that they would be followed by seven years of famine. Had Joseph not been in Egypt, the Jews might have stored the surplus for the lean times and sold grain to Egypt. And the story would be different.

The Israelites were not being wronged by God. However, they had no sense of divine justice. They needed, then, to feel the consequences of their own injustice in their own flesh so that, crying out for the justice they did not have, they would receive, from the Lord's own hands, His laws engraved on tablets. And they were filled with them.

Read Matthew 5: 17-20.

"Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." Isaiah 42:1.

"For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:20.

For the Jews, law and justice were proclaimed directly by God and inscribed on stone tablets by Moses. For the Gentiles, law, justice, and righteousness were proclaimed by the Word of Jesus. Some instructions, however, that were valid for the Jews were modified in the age of grace. They were not revoked but added to and perfected according to the Divine plan. And unless our righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, we will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

In the age of the Law, those who obeyed the Lord's will were the **righteous**.
In the age of grace, those who believe in the Word of Jesus are the **justified**.

BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL: FOR THEY SHALL OBTAIN MERCY

Matthew 5:7.

"And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy." Exodus 33:19.

"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Micah 6:8.

"For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." Hosea 6.6.

"Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother" Zechariah 7.9.

In Hebrew, "mercy" is the translation of "Hesed" (חֶסֶד), referring to covenant loyalty rooted in steadfast love and describing God's unwavering faithfulness to His people. Mercy is also translated

from “Rachamim/Racham” (רחמים/רחם), a word that originated from “Rechem”, meaning "womb", meaning an emotional "gut-level" compassionate maternal love.

In Greek, “mercy” is the translation of the term “Eleos” (ἔ λ ε ο ς), meaning compassion, and it focuses on actions that soothe, comfort, and relieve pain, much like pouring oil on a wound for someone in need.

In the Old Testament, there is much talk of mercy, but mainly of God's mercy towards man. On a few occasions, such as those mentioned above, there is mention of man's mercy towards man. But the great emphasis of the Gospel of Jesus is precisely the mercy of man towards man, and more than that, the **true connection** between divine mercy and the mercy of man.

Before and during the age of the Law, God's law prescribed animal sacrifices from man for the remission of sins. By allowing His Beloved Son to be sacrificed on the cross, God changes the paradigms of Salvation, and replaces animal sacrifices with His own mercy, represented by Jesus' love for our miserable situation when He gave Himself for us in sacrifice. Mercy results, therefore, in God's free Grace, but man needs to accept it to receive it. If man does not accept this mercy, he will not receive grace from the Creator, and the way to accept God's mercy is precisely to have mercy on one's neighbor.

Read Matthew 18:23-35 and Luke 17:3-10.

Here Jesus refers us to the parable of the unforgiving servant and the guidance on how many times one should forgive one's brother.

The Lord's Prayer says in Matthew 6:9-15:

“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”

Reinforced by the teaching:

“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.”

The justice of the age of law is an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. The justice of the age of Grace begins with mercy. In not judging so that you will not be judged, in not condemning so that you will not be condemned, in forgiving so that you will be forgiven, in giving so that you will receive. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you.

We have, then, reflected in the lessons and example of Jesus, that every act of mercy will involve, to a greater or lesser degree, two components: love and sacrifice. If we are not giving up something that is ours, then mercy is not mercy, and if we do not do it out of love, it will not be mercy either. It is not enough to give; it is necessary to give with love. It is not enough to love; it is also necessary to surrender.

We also note the sequence of events here. The Israelites, a people who, as we have seen, hungered and thirsted for justice, in addition to receiving the tablets of the law, also received the visit of the Messiah, who continued to preach divine justice and to develop it in aspects that have only been outlined so far, linking, in the age of Grace, divine mercy to the mercy of man.

BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART: FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD.

Matthew 5:8.

“Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.” Psalms 24:3 -4.

“He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure. Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off.” Isaiah 33:15-17.

Read Matthew 15:1-20.

“Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.”

Read Matthew 5:21-48.

“But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Matthew 5:22.

“But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” Matthew 5:28.

“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” Matthew 5:44-45.

Read John 13:1-11.

“And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.” John 13:2-5.

“If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.” John 13:1.

“Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.” John 15:3.

Continuing His message, Jesus then preaches to mankind the necessity of sanctification. In the age of the law, it was enough to be righteous. In the age of grace, mercy towards one's neighbor is necessary. But this is not merely an exchange. Jesus demands more, beginning with purity of heart as a prerequisite for "seeing" (or perhaps understanding) God.

But what contaminates the heart? And who is responsible for putting impure things in the heart? Who is responsible for anger? Who is responsible for sensuality? Who is responsible for lying? Who is responsible for violence? Who is responsible for blasphemy? Who is responsible for theft? Who is responsible for putting evil intentions in the heart? Who puts filth in the heart? Who put it in Judas' heart to betray Jesus?

Do you know how to identify the presence of the devil?

Do you know how to identify the work of the devil?

Just as it was the devil who put it in Judas' heart to betray Jesus, it is also the devil who puts in our hearts the elements so that we too betray our Savior.

Pay attention to the devil's traps.

If you are angry with someone, pay attention! This person is probably being used by evil as a trap to let filth penetrate your heart. Cleanse this filth with the Word of Jesus, love this person, and pray for them. Don't fall into the enemy's trap.

“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you”. Matthew 5:44.

If someone is trying to seduce you into committing adultery, pay attention! The devil can only be behind it. Beware! Do not have sexual relations with Satan! Cleanse the filth with the Word of Jesus. Do not commit adultery, not even in thought.

“That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” Matthew 5:28.

If the temptation is to lie, continue identifying your enemy. The father of all lies is Satan. Flee from him.

“But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.” Matthew 5:37.

Are you tempted to speak ill of someone? Well, the devil's presence is strong here. Cleanse this filth from your heart with the Word of Jesus.

“Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.” Luke 6:37-38.

Just like righteousness, sanctification comes through carefully guarding and practicing God's Word. Satan's greatest enemy is the Word of Jesus. The Word of Jesus, kept in the heart, is the only

weapon we have to win this battle that is fought daily in our hearts. The Word of Jesus is the only water capable of cleansing the filth of the heart and sanctifying the believer. The sanctification of man leads him to see God, but in His divine plan, God has more in store for man.

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS:
FOR THEY SHALL BE CALLED THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

Matthew 5:9.
Read Luke 10:1-24 and Matthew 5.43-48.

"And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again." Luke 10:5-6.

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Matthew 5.44-48.

The peacemakers are the disciples sent to spread the Gospel throughout the world. Jesus' instruction to proclaim the words **"Peace be to this house!"** in hosts' homes had profound reasons. The Word is not preached with violence, but with love. The Word does not combine with the sword, but with affection. The Word does not recommend dissension, but rather humility and love for enemies. Those who preach the Word encounter resistance and opposition from the world, but instead, this leads to war, peace, and love, for those who preach and practice this Word are in the process of becoming perfect as children of God.

BLESSED ARE THEY WHICH ARE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE:
FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

Matthew 5:10.
Read Luke 21:7-19.
Read chapters 4, 6, and 7 from the book of Acts.

"In your patience possess ye your souls." Luke 21:19.

The Greek word "ὑπομονῇ" (hypomonē), sometimes translated as "patience" and sometimes translated as "endurance," was associated with "persecution" as well as with "the destination of the soul in the kingdom of heaven."

"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." Matthew 5:11-12.

The blessings culminate for the true apostles. Those who leave home and family, comfort and material possessions to serve and follow Jesus. Those who do not deny their God, even if it costs them their lives. For these, the Father has a special reward. The great prize to be received in heaven. The great joy of having served the Father and the happiness of laying the crown of glory at His feet.

We can also clearly see that the sequence of the beatitudes has an evolutionary character. Not only in the historical analogy of God's people, but also in the process of sanctification and inner growth of each believer individually. The blessings, as they are related, reveal God's own plan for his children. From the humble who simply wait for the Lord, to those who mourn, those who endure meekly, those who seek justice, those who exercise mercy, those who cleanse themselves in the Word of Jesus, those who carry the Word of Jesus, and those who dedicate and surrender their lives to the ministry of this Word.

"Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old." Matthew 13:51-52.

The Word of Jesus came new to the Jewish people.

Even so, Jesus confirmed and made His own the Word given to the patriarchs and prophets.

And upon this Word, Jesus ministered His teachings and commandments, without denying the old Word, but on the contrary, perfecting it and making it alive for a new people and a new nation, built upon a new rock and a new conception of God's love. A good news called Gospel.

"And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." Matthew 11:6 e Luke 7:23.

Through sin, man loses communion with God. But God, in His infinite mercy, has placed him on a **"way"** leading to Himself. This **"way"** is called Jesus. It is not an easy road. Narrow and full of difficulties, it presents obstacles at every turn. Let us not stumble over the words of Jesus. Let us learn to listen to and accept the plan that God has for us. Let us learn to see, keep, and respect this Word so that we do not stumble over it. And if we do so, blessed shall we be. Learn to walk this **"way"**. The other option is very sad.

Read Revelation chapter 7.

"These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Revelation 7:14-17.

BUT WOE UNTO YOU...
THE DAMNATION OF HELL

Read Matthew 23:13-36.

"But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep. Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets." Luke 6. 24-26.

Matthew 23:13-36.

"But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

In delivering his teachings and beatitudes, Jesus uses figurative language through parables, comparisons, and metaphors, acknowledging that not everyone is capable of understanding them. However, when cursing those who should bring God's Word to His children and fail because of their own iniquity and hypocrisy, Jesus uses clear and open language that leaves no room for interpretation and requires no interpretation.

GET THEE HENCE, SATAN
IDENTIFYING THE ENEMY

Read Matthew 4:1-11 and Genesis Chapter 3.

One of the greatest difficulties for man, in his passage through the earth, is identifying evil.

Before beginning the ministry of the Word, Jesus was led into the desert by the Spirit, specifically to be tempted by the devil.

This is an important detail, which usually goes unnoticed: who took Jesus to the devil, and for what purpose?

Satan, the tempter, manifested himself in person to Jesus and established a direct dialogue with him.

Jesus, as God, knew Satan. But as God, he had never been tempted by him.

Theoretically, as the Son of Man, Jesus did not yet know the devil or the influence that evil could have on the flesh.

Jesus was taken to the devil by the Spirit himself, so that, as the Son of Man, he might learn what it was to be tempted by Satan.

Knowing temptation was a prerequisite for beginning ministry. Not only knowing it, but identifying it in its various forms. He who does not know how to identify the enemy will never defeat him.

The three temptations of Jesus were related not only to His human nature but also to His divine nature. Turning stones into bread, giving orders to angels, and having glory and power over all the kingdoms of the world are not exactly things accessible to any mortal. But the three temptations had something in common. In all of them, Jesus would be giving up his human nature to become God again.

Ceasing to be a simple mortal and becoming like God is the greatest temptation that Satan can offer to any human being. This was exactly the argument that the serpent used with Eve, convincing her to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. To become "**like God.**"

The average man doesn't want to die. His dream is to be immortal, and more than immortal, master of his own destiny and his own nose. Master of the knowledge of good and evil. Master of truth and judgment. Master of power and justice. This is precisely the legacy of sin we received from Adam and Eve: to cease being a man and become a "god."

MAN SHALL LIVE BY EVERY WORD
THAT PROCEEDETH OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD
THE FIRST TEMPTATION

Read Matthew 4:1-11.
Read Deuteronomy chapter 8.

After fasting for forty days and forty nights, Jesus was hungry.

After forty days and forty nights of fasting, it was only natural that Jesus would be hungry.

During this period, Jesus' physical body was nourished by the Word of God, which, as we saw earlier, had fed the Israelites in the desert and Moses on Mount Sinai.

Turning stones into bread might not seem like a great sin to us, after all; Jesus would later turn water into wine and multiply loaves and fish. But there was a big difference:

This work had been suggested by Satan.

The fact that it was suggested by Satan makes any action a great sin. Recognizing this is the first step so that we do not stray from God's path.

Jesus' response to this suggestion was complete:

“It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

Given the seemingly harmless task of doing something that came from the mouth of Satan, Jesus chose to continue fasting. Living by the Word means, above all, being faithful to God's instruction;

and it is His promise that we will be sustained by it. Jesus was hungry, but He didn't even question the possibility suggested by the devil. It wasn't God's instruction to do this. If it wasn't His instruction, therefore, it shouldn't be done. The fact that it was suggested by Satan is reason enough to recognize an action as sinful.

"And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day." Deuteronomy 8:17-18.

THOU SHALT NOT TEMPT THE LORD THY GOD
THE SECOND TEMPTATION

Read Matthew 4:1-11
Read Psalms Chapter 91; and Deuteronomy Chapter 6.

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.
"He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." Psalms 91:1-2 and 11-12.

The second temptation was far more subtle than the first.
If Jesus had answered that "**"It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."** quoting Deuteronomy 8:3, then Satan also quoted the Holy Scripture itself, Psalm 91 of David, to justify sin.
Apparently, what harm could there be in being sustained by angels? Later in his ministry, Jesus would walk on water and emerge unscathed from various mobs of Jews who tried to arrest and stone him. Why was this now a sin?

"Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you; (For the LORD thy God is a jealous God among you) lest the anger of the LORD thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth. <u>Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted him in Massah.</u> Ye shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes, which he hath commanded thee." Deuteronomy 6:13-17.

Read Exodus 17:1-7.

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because <u>they tempted the LORD</u>, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?" Exodus 17:5-7.

In Massah, the people of Israel were thirsty.
Why not wait on the Lord?
Why rebel? It seemed as if all that was left was to stone Moses.

"Is the LORD among us, or not?"

The Lord not only promised, but under oath, guaranteed that He would take care of His people.
Why the rebellion and disbelief?
Why not be humble and ask in prayer?
Why demand that God fulfill our desires?
Why tempt God by demanding His promise recorded in Holy Scripture?
God owes us nothing. We are debtors. To tempt God is to try to reverse this situation.
If we exist as we are, this only shows God's love. If He gives us something, it is because of His mercy. To demand that God satisfy our whims and to use Scripture to justify this is a sin suggested by Satan.

"And thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the LORD: that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest go in and possess the good land which the LORD sware

unto thy fathers, to cast out all thine enemies from before thee, as the LORD hath spoken." Deuteronomy 6:18-19.

THOU SHALT WORSHIP THE LORD THY GOD, AND HIM ONLY SHALT THOU SERVE
THE THIRD TEMPTATION

"Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Matthew 4:10.

In the first two temptations, Satan merely suggested that Jesus act in a way that was dissonant with God's will. In this temptation, Satan proposed a trade: he would give him the whole world for an act of worship.

For man, an act of worship apparently has little value. But how much is it worth to God, or to the devil?

After all, what can we give to God that is not already His? What do we possess in this life that is truly ours? What can we accomplish in this world that God cannot do with a thought? What can we do in this life that truly has value to God?

To worship and pay homage to God is an act of free will. It is the child's desire to be in the Father's lap. It is the child's desire to seek the Father and receive His affection, His love, and His embrace. It is the love that strengthens the bonds between the Creator and the creature. It is the supreme happiness that any human being understands very well from birth. It is the joy of being able to bring pleasure to the Creator. It is the recognition of the paternal love that created us and brought us into the world.

How can we worship another?

How can we deny the one who holds all power in his hands, who loves us with perfect love and only expects us to reciprocate?

"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Matthew 4:10.

"Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Matthew 4:10.

THOU SAVOUREST NOT THE THINGS THAT BE OF GOD

Read Matthew 16:22-23.

"Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, **Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."**

It is not always easy to recognize the presence of Satan.

It is evident that he is present in a fit of anger, in a manifestation of violence, in the utterance of blasphemy, in the elaboration of a lie, and in the consummation of sins such as murder and adultery (although many people cannot identify him even in these very clear manifestations).

But often, he is by our side during routine and unassuming activities, suggesting phrases and thoughts, eliciting emotions and behaviors that are at odds with God's will.

The word spoken by Peter apparently showed no signs of the evil one. He called Jesus Lord. He asked for compassion.

But Jesus was quick to identify the enemy and give Peter a great lesson.

"...for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

When human beings are not wallowing in sin, when God is present and reigning, when everything is going well, Satan's strategy is to appeal to egocentrism and work to make man begin to consider his own interests.

Satan's goal is to make man stop thinking about the things of God, and for this, he uses the very elements that were given to man by the Creator.

John 6:70.

"Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?

Read John 13:1-30.

“And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.” John 13:2-5.

“If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.” John 13:8.
“He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.” John 13:8.
“Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.” John 13:21.
“He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly.” John 13:26-27.

Read Luke 22: 47-53
“When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness. Luke 22:53

Read the book of Job, chapters 1 and 2.

“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. Luke 22:31-32.

Despite being a stubborn enemy of the kingdom of God, Satan was one of the elements in the consummation of Jesus' redemptive sacrifice, allowing salvation through faith for millions of people.
Satan is cunning and deceitful, but even his boldest actions are known to God and used by Him for the purification of His elect. Satan only acts with the knowledge and consent of God, who remains omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient.
Satan acts through the carnal and essentially human nature. This is the reason for his great dominion over men. As the Spirit exercises its authority over the believer's flesh, Satan loses his influence and is literally expelled from his dominion over carnal nature.

“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” John 4:24.

In spirit and in truth, man renounces the desires of the flesh and is able to submit to the kingdom of God, escaping sin, lies, and the dominion of Satan.

“And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.” Luke 10:17:20.

Read Mark 4:1-20.

“The sower soweth the word. And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.” Mark 4:14-15.

The greatest enemy and the first target of Satan's actions is the Word of Jesus.
During his ministry, Jesus always made a point of speaking about and identifying the enemy, holding him responsible for the presence of evil in the world.
Many people are afraid to mention Satan's name. Others make a point of forgetting his existence. Many don't believe he can exist.
That's exactly what Satan wants.
Going unnoticed, he can act freely. Disguised, man doesn't notice his influence. But Jesus always made a point of showing his presence and his action in the heart of man.
But with a little practice, we can easily notice its presence: in a malicious comment, in sensual clothing, in a manifestation of intolerance, in a gesture or word of violence, in the handling of men's affairs, in lies, in theft, in the worship of egocentrism, in a moment of anger. Identify the enemy using

the Word of Jesus. Satan does not like to be discovered by the Word, and when this happens, he is quickly expelled by it. Do not be deceived by the enemy. Do not fall into his traps and suggestions. Be truly firm in the Word of Jesus, not allowing your seed to be snatched away, for after the tree grows strong, the evil one no longer has power over it.

"And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate. And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, **Thou sayest it**. And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing. And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee. But Jesus yet **answered nothing**; so that Pilate marveled." Mark 15:1-5

Satan is also known as the "accuser."
In the "hour and power of darkness," Satan was in control.
Through the Jewish priests, Satan accused Jesus.
But Jesus responded in **silence**.
Jesus' **silence** before the accuser is also a **powerful Word**.
Many times, we are accused by Satan of our sins.
Satan wants us to defend ourselves. In doing so, we usually end up sinning more, trying to justify our wrongdoings, or sometimes lying and sinning more without realizing it. This is the accuser's goal.
But the lesson of this passage is that we should not discuss our sins with the enemy.
We deal with our sins only with God, our Father. With Him we have the advocate, who is Jesus.
Let us only remain silent before the accuser.
Let us deal with our sins with our Father.

COME OUT OF THE MAN, THOU UNCLEAN SPIRIT

"When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his Word, and healed all that were sick" Matthew 8:16

Read Mark 5:1-14.
"For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit."

Read Matthew 12:43-45.

"When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation."

True liberation is achieved only through Jesus, through His Word.
Liberation that is not accompanied by surrender is fleeting and transient. Whoever is liberated but does not want to follow Jesus becomes a slave to sin of their own free will.
The first state of evil was apparent. The spirit did not know how to conceal its manifestation.
But worse is the state of one who harbors evil and is unaware of it. They live with seven unclean spirits that control their life, but they allow it and delight in it. Whoever does not want to abandon sin and is satisfied with this kind of life is, indeed, in a terrible state.
It is not enough to merely speak in His name. It is necessary to keep the Word.
It is not enough to merely speak of Jesus; it is necessary to follow Him.
It is not enough to merely ask for favors; it is necessary to surrender one's life to Him.
By liberating man from the spirit of infirmity, Jesus gives him the opportunity for true liberation.
But true liberation only exists for those who remain in the Word.

"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:31-32.

The Word is what sets us free.
The Word is what cleanses the heart.
In a contaminated heart, there are only unclean spirits.
And it is necessary to be clean of heart so that the Spirit may dwell within.

Or your heart will be given over to the **“evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies”**, seven unclean spirits that defile this wicked generation, making its state deplorable. Matthew 15:19.

Read Mark 9:14-29.

“Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.
“This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.”

The disciples were given the power to cast out demons.
The demons are indeed cast out, but they can return to the possessed person.
The Word needs to reach the spirit, but reaching only the spirit is not enough. The Word needs to be kept by those who suffer persecution.
Keeping the Word is maintaining contact with the Savior.
Keeping the Word is abstaining from sin.
Surrender to Jesus, through prayer and fasting, is essential for the true liberation of those whom God has allowed to be visited by Satan.

THE CANAANITE WOMAN, HER DAUGHTER, AND HER PUPPIES

Read Matthew 15:22-38.

In this passage, which has been controversially interpreted, Jesus' attitude towards the Canaanite woman seems strange to many. It seems strange to us readers, who are accustomed to a Jesus who never refused to help those who sought him out, even if they were not Israelites. It seemed strange to the disciples, who came after Jesus, begging Him to help the woman. It only did not seem strange to the Canaanite woman, who had a **ready answer** for Jesus' strange words: **“It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.”**

But there are three small details in this account that are far stranger than Jesus' attitude. Let's take a look:

1) The woman reports that her daughter is "possessed by a demon," but she doesn't ask for mercy for her daughter; in fact, she asks for **mercy for herself**.
2) After Jesus answered (the disciples, not the woman) that he had been sent to the "lost sheep of Israel," the Canaanite woman asks for **help for herself** (not for help for her daughter).
3) When the woman begs for a crumb, and Jesus recognizes her faith, he says, **“be it unto thee even as thou wilt”** and not, "Let it be done **to your daughter** as you wish."

The search for help wasn't centered on the daughter who was apparently "possessed," but rather on the mother, who was the focus of the plea for help, as if the daughter's behavior was inconvenient for the mother, who was seemingly playing the victim. This leads us to two questions:

1) Who was "demonizing" the daughter's life?
2) Who was taking food away from the children (or the daughter)?

In my life, I've witnessed firsthand many mothers making their daughters' lives miserable, with the daughters reacting impulsively to their mothers' attempts to control. Some mothers try to enslave their daughters to their whims and manage to completely destroy a relationship that should be one of love, affection, and understanding. Some women, at times, love their puppies more than their own daughters (or sons) and take the bread from their daughters' (and sons') mouths to give to their puppies. In my view, it's quite possible that Jesus perceived this as the case: the Canaanite woman was making her daughter's life miserable and victimizing herself in the process, as if the problem revolved around her own navel, and not around her daughter. As a corollary, she gave more affection to her pets than to her own children (something strange when reported, but very common).

The woman who should have been asking for help for her daughter was asking for help for herself (taking the bread from her daughter). And it seems she was actually throwing the bread to the dogs, because she didn't even thank Jesus. The woman who spoke and cried out incessantly to the point of disturbing the disciples **suddenly fell silent**, and there is no record of her thanking the "Son of David" (as non-Jews called the Jews), or giving glory to the "God of Israel" (as non-Jews called the God of the Jews). **Did the woman become mute?** A matter for speculation! But what Jesus did with

the mother **(“be it unto thee even as thou wilt”)** seems to have solved the daughter's problem, and in the end, the bread was given to the daughter (and not to the dogs).

BEWARE OF FALSE PROPHETS

Matthew 7:11-27.

“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?” Matthew 7:15-16.

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” Matthew 7:22-23.

People like to watch new spectacles.

Often, we don't have time to contemplate the majestic works of the Lord, such as the sunrise, the infinity of stars, the breaking of waves on the rocks, or the flight of a bird. Beautiful things created by God, but which we know happened yesterday and will probably continue to happen tomorrow.

But new spectacles attract attention.

Jesus warned us against false prophets. He warned us that they would perform wonders, or spectacles, to deceive men.

The one behind them is not God, but Satan.

The question to be answered is:

If Satan needs to perform a healing or cast out a demon to deceive man, will he do it?

Certainly, or at least he will give the impression that he has.

Great will be the disappointment of those who think they are serving the Lord, and are being instruments of the devil. It is difficult to perceive the difference.

The key to this lies in the very words of these men:

“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?” Matthew 7:21.

Man has no power over spiritual forces.

We do not cast out demons. Neither in our name, nor “in the name” of Jesus.

The one who truly casts out demons **is the Spirit of God, through the Word of Jesus**.

Satan certainly gave the false prophets the impression that they were something great: delegates of the Lord, with power over the spiritual world. They had no power to perform miracles “in the name” of Jesus!

Man does not perform miracles.

Satan also tries to imitate God, sometimes working wonders in the eyes of men. Removing spirits of infirmity that he himself had placed upon people. Ordering the temporary removal of unclean spirits that he himself commanded to torment man. And often he does this in such a way as to give the false prophet the impression that he himself has the gift of performing these wonders. He inflates his ego, diverts him from the true Word of God, and begins to command him, confirming his actions through spectacles. In this way, he gathers an unwary person, who then leads a multitude along with him.

But the true miracle is performed by the Spirit of God.

The true work of God is not a colorful spectacle.

The true miracle is the conversion of the human heart.

“This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” John 6:29.

It is the Spirit of God who truly liberates man from demons, but this only happens when the kingdom of God has come upon man.

The man who consecrates himself to doing the Lord's will, who receives His kingdom, or His reign in his heart, who keeps the Word and becomes the dwelling place of the Spirit of God, he is truly free.

If this does not happen, it will all have been just a spectacle to deceive the unwary.

“Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven. Luke 10:20.

FORBID HIM NOT

Read Matthew 7:7-12.

“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.” Matthew 7:12.

One of the greatest needs of God's people is to minister His Word.

Having been touched by it and known its power, the believer lives in the eagerness to transmit God's Word, converting his brothers to the Lord's path.

And, in the same way that we long to receive the Word, we also have the need to transmit it. But, in this process, the believer often faces a dilemma in the world. How to transmit the Word?

Our world is populated by a multitude of religions.

People who have their opinions and their own points of view to face God, life after death, the spiritual world, the relationship of the spiritual world with the material world, the role of Jesus Christ on Earth, the existence or not of Satan, the existence or not of hell, the existence or not of God, the role of the most varied types of religious leaders, superstition, idolatry, and so many different and unique ways of approaching the theme of spirituality.

Even within the Christian community, dissensions and disputes thrive over the most varied doctrinal themes, sometimes diverting believers' attention from the message of Jesus.

We, however, have the firm conviction that the Bible is the true message of God to man. We have an even firmer conviction that the Word of Jesus is the core and basic essence of this divine message.

But not all people living in the world think this way.

For many, the Bible is an outdated, Judaizing, contradictory, and meaningless book.

Many people think this way for a very simple reason: they do not know the Word of Jesus.

Other people, even though they have had contact with the Word of God, have not yet been transformed by it. Superficially knowledgeable people deceive themselves with doctrines of men who place the message of the gospel in the background, rendering the value of the Word useless.

Others seek, even sincerely, through the worship of idols, saints, and spirits, to replace the presence of the Father, since they cannot place their own lives in the redeeming hands of Jesus.

But in the same way, just as believers like to be respected in their opinions, they also need to respect the opinions of others, even if they are completely contrary to their firmest convictions. So how can we spread the gospel while respecting the basic principle of coexistence?

“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.” Matthew 7:12.

Read Mark 9:38-41 and Luke 9:49-50.

“And John answered him, saying, **Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part. For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.”** Mark 9:38-41.

Sometimes, believers even encounter situations like the one John experienced. Being certain of Jesus' ministry, being by his side daily, witnessing his teachings and miracles, suddenly, he finds a stranger casting out demons in the name of Jesus!?! How?!?

The believer's first impulse is to be absolutely opposed to this activity. Even if it is performed in the name of Jesus. But Jesus' instruction is absolutely clear:

“Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me.” Mark 9:39.

The power of Jesus is so great that His presence is powerful for all who call upon His name. Even for those who have not yet truly come to Him. Even for those who do not yet follow Him. Even for those who have not yet surrendered to Him.

It is necessary to keep in mind that the power of Jesus is present, even among those who are not yet His. And if the power of Jesus is present, there will be His transforming force, which, sooner or later, will convert man to His way. To fight this presence is to close the doors to Jesus. Jesus' first instruction to the disciples, then, is to be tolerant.

"For whoever is not against us is for us."
But this absolutely does not mean that man can proceed without Jesus.

TAKE HEED THAT NO MAN DECEIVE YOU

Read Matthew 24:3-14

“And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.” Matthew 24:3-5.

Speaking of Jesus, using Him as an example, attributing attitudes or thoughts to Him, are strategies commonly used by ministers of various religions to lend authority to their own discourse.
Speaking of Jesus is one thing. Teaching His Word is something quite different.
Speaking of Jesus confers authority to the discourse. Preaching His Word brings the very Spirit of God to work in hearts.
“Take heed that no man deceive you”.
The difference between the true and the false prophet is simply the preaching of the Word.
The false prophet performs miracles and speaks of Jesus.
The true prophet teaches to keep the Word of Jesus and to baptize with the Holy Spirit.
The Word of Jesus is complete and sufficient for the salvation of man. There is no need to add anything to it.

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, **All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”** Matthew 28:19-20.

This was Jesus' last commandment to the apostles: **“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you”.**
Jesus did not send the apostles to perform miracles, heal, or put on shows of power.
He sent them to teach them to observe the Word, to make and baptize disciples in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
That is the difference between a true prophet and a false prophet. Pay attention to their preaching.

HOW CAN SATAN CAST OUT SATAN?

Read Mark 3:20-30 and Matthew 12:22-37.

“And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, **How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house.”**
Even the Jews of Jesus' time were aware that Satan could use tricks to deceive those who were not yet firm in the faith.
Satan may "pretend" to cast out demons. But he doesn't really do it.
Satan may even speak "in the name of Jesus," but he doesn't teach to keep His Word.
The Word of Jesus brings the Spirit of God. Whoever keeps it will have truly cast out Satan.
Whoever keeps the Word receives the kingdom of God.
"How can Satan cast out Satan?"
The answer is very simple.
If Satan speaks of Jesus while deceiving the unwary, he also opens a breach for his defeat. That is his weak point.
If the false prophet uses the authority of the name of Jesus, he cannot go against His Word. Whoever sincerely follows a false prophet who uses the authority of Jesus will sooner or later be touched by His Word, which will open their eyes, untangling every knot and every net.

“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, **If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.** John 8:31-32.

“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.” John 14:21

“**“If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.**” John 14:23-24.

Therefore, Jesus taught that the believer's attitude should be one of tolerance.

“Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part”. Mark 9:39-40.

If the disciple of the false prophet already accepts Jesus, it is enough to present him with His true Word. No prohibitions are necessary. No discussions are necessary. He already accepts Jesus, even if he does not know Him or keep His Word.

Jesus already taught what the believer's strategy should be: if the person already believes in Christ, why not learn to keep His Word? The Holy Spirit will do the rest.

Furthermore, the discussion reveals another major problem:

“Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation.” Mark 3:28-29.

“He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.” Matthew 12:30 and Luke 11:23.

If you and a brother of any other faith initiate a theological-doctrinal discussion that addresses differing aspects of philosophical or spiritual matters, and for any reason this brother, confusing things, utters some blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, then you will be an instrument of the enemy, causing this brother to commit an unforgivable sin. In this way, instead of winning souls for Jesus, you are winning souls for Satan. This is not the way. This is not the **"door."**

THE GATES OF HELL SHALL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT.

Read Matthew 16:13-20.

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Matthew 16:18.

We can see that there are currently two currents within the Christian community.

The more "engaged" current is composed of the "warriors." They declare "spiritual battle" against evil, pray, and intervene, directly asking for God's action against the works and manifestations of Satan and his helpers. When they preach, they sometimes talk more about the devil than about God, and their discourse is heavy and sometimes even unpleasant. Their vocabulary is rich in terms such as "binding the enemy" (a misinterpretation of Jesus' Word), "liberating," and "warring." Sometimes they even go too far and begin to see the constant presence of Satan in all the unpleasant events of life.

The more "traditional" current, on the other hand, practically ignores the existence of Satan. They rarely speak of the enemy, and when he is mentioned, they change the subject, trying not to find out more. These believers prefer to proclaim the sovereignty of God and, faced with the undesirable facts of existence, cry out for divine mercy, which, in one way or another, answers them, just as it answers the invocations of warriors. They sometimes err by attributing manifestations of satanic responsibility to men, creating judgments and sometimes enmities with the instruments of the devil, when in fact the enemy is another and is not being adequately recognized.

Among extremists, there are all gradations.

But, regardless of how the spiritual world is viewed, the result is the same: the Church shakes the gates of hell. This is the function of the Church, defined by Jesus at the moment of its conception: to shake the gates of hell, and they will not prevail. The result is this: regardless of how man views spiritual reality or the vocabulary or emphasis used, it is not man who does the work, but the Spirit of God. And the instrument for this is the Word of Jesus. Let us then learn to recognize the enemy, let us become aware of the battle that the Church wages at the gates of hell, and let us learn to wield our weapon skillfully, which is the Word of God.

“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” Ephesians 6:17

ENTER YE IN AT THE STRAIT GATE

Read Matthew 7:11-27.

“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” Matthew 7:13-14.

“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.” Matthew 7:24-27.

It's not enough to just speak “in the name” of Jesus.
That's what false prophets do.
It's not difficult to recognize false prophets; just check their fruits (their words).
Jesus didn't tell us that He would send "**true prophets.**"
The True Prophet is the very Word of Jesus.
After Jesus, only **ministers of the Word** came. (Luke 1:1-4).
Therefore, it's not enough to just speak in the name of Jesus.
It's necessary to have His Word abiding within you.
It's necessary to faithfully follow what His Word says.
It's necessary to practice His Word.
This is truly keeping the Word.
And it itself will serve as our “prophet”.
It will be the voice that guides the sheep.

FOR MANY ARE CALLED, BUT FEW ARE CHOSEN

Read Matthew 25:31-46.

“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Matthew 25:31-34.

What really matters for Salvation?

Jesus made it very clear that it's not what you believe that matters, but **Who you believe in and how you practice the Words of eternal life.** Dear friend. Don't fall into the temptation of preaching your “religion”. **Preach the Word of the Savior.** Do what really matters. But don't just preach with words. Preach above all with example. Practice this Word and build your life on this unshakeable rock: Jesus. The name of your religion doesn't matter. The beautiful theories that try to explain complex spiritual mechanisms and processes that we are not even meant to know are irrelevant. BEWARE! Don't waste time or precious opportunities to talk about Jesus and his Word with philosophical niceties that lead nowhere. Don't fight "religions." Take the living and true Word of Jesus, because this Word, by itself, being alive and transformative, leads to the true victory of the Holy Spirit.

“Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:19.

THE VERY HAIRS OF YOUR HEAD ARE ALL NUMBERED

Read Genesis 1:1-31.

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.” Genesis 1:1-26.

God is the absolute Creator of the Universe, and He reigns over everything.

If there is anything in man that makes him similar to God, it is the dominion, granted to him by God Himself, over the material elements of the Earth.

Man, therefore, lives within this terrible ambiguity. Even being a creature, he is similar to the Creator. Even being subject to the Creator, he has dominion over the Earth. Even having free will, he must submit to the will of God.

But, even having dominion over the Earth, man does not always have control over himself. Adam and Eve proved this by disobeying God, by eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The very inheritance that makes man similar to God (dominion or free will) was the reason for the separation between man and God.

It was the conflict between the will of man and the will of God that caused the dissension between the Creator and the creature made in His image and likeness.

Man's free will and God's sovereignty is one of the most difficult points that human philosophy attempts to grapple with: if God is sovereign, how does He allow man's free will? Does man truly possess free will, or is he predestined? Is salvation achieved through works or predestination? Which prevails: man's dominion or God's?

Read Matthew 10:24-33 and Luke 12:1-12.

“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Matthew 10:28-30.

Man has dominion over some things, but God is Sovereign.

“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.”

To deny that man has been granted dominion is to deny his likeness to God. However, man's dominion is not absolute, for it is subordinate to God's will.

All dominion that man exercises is always subordinate to God's consent. God allows man to choose, but only when it does not go against His designs.

A sparrow does not fall from the sky without His consent. God even knows the number of our hairs. But because we were made in His image and likeness, we have dominion, or free will, over our actions. Because we are made in the image and likeness of God, we share responsibility for our works.

The price of dominion is responsibility for actions or works.

And the consequence of responsibility is reward or punishment for what was done or left undone.

“But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. Matthew 10:33.

“Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.” Matthew 12:31-32.

Read Matthew 22.1-14; Luke 14:15-24 and Matthew 7:15-23.

“For many are called, but few are chosen.” Matthew 22:14.

“And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.” Luke 14:23.

But God is still Sovereign. He invites some to the banquet; others, He compels to participate. But not all who are called are chosen. He who confesses Jesus (not only saying “Lord, Lord,” but doing God’s will and not his own) will have an advocate for Him. He who denies Him (in word and deed) will have no one to defend him before the throne of God. The separation between man and God occurs (similar to the decision of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden) when man prefers to do his own will and ignores God's sovereign will. The Word of Jesus shows that man needs, through his own

responsibility, to correct this error, denying himself and upholding God's will, so that, through Jesus, he may again, figuratively, have access to the tree of life and to paradise.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Matthew 7:21.

As long as man retains dominion over his life, he is a creature **similar to God**. By relinquishing his dominion and submitting to God's will, he becomes a **child of God.**

FROM EVERLASTING TO EVERLASTING, THOU ART GOD

"Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength" Isaiah 26:4.

"Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." Psalms 90:1-2.

"The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever." Isaiah 40:6-8.

Have you ever noticed how the Word of God remains absolutely alive?

Have you ever realized that phrases spoken thousands of years ago continue to have strength, impact, and power to convert and transform lives, change destinies, and reign absolutely over millions of hearts?

God is an eternal rock.
The Lord is God from eternity to eternity.
The Word of the Lord remains eternally.
Man is grass that dries up and withers. But even the Word of God is eternal.
It is difficult for man to understand what eternity is.
How can one comprehend, humanly, that which was never created? Never had a beginning?
God has a dimension unknown to man: that of time.

Read John 1:35-51 and Matthew 26:31-75.

"Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. Matthew 26:31-32.

"Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice." Matthew 26:34.

"And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly". Matthew 26:75.

In this passage, Jesus demonstrated that he knew the future in its smallest details.
But what power is this: to know the future?
Knowing the past is not so difficult. It is enough to have been present during the course of events. Knowing the present is already more understandable. But how to know what has not happened? What dimension is this? What power is this? How to understand it?
God has this power.
It is said that God is omniscient. Everything that happens is known to God.
God is omniscient in relation to the past.
God is omniscient in relation to the present.
God is omniscient in relation to the future.
The dimension of time is no secret to God.
But it is a mystery to us, three-dimensional beings.

"Then spake Joshua to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day. And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the LORD fought for Israel." Joshua 10:12-15.

"And Isaiah the prophet cried unto the LORD: and he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz.2 Kings 20:1-11

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." Salmo 91.1.

God is also called **the Almighty**, which means **Omnipotent.**
This means that He can literally do anything He wants.
If He wants, He can stop the sun.
If He wants, He can turn back time.
Can you understand this?
One of the greatest dreams of science fiction is the time machine: an instrument that allows man to visit the past or travel to the future.
Is this possible for a man?
If God is **Omnipotent**, this is possible for God!

Read Exodus chapter 3.
Also read John 8:21-59.

"Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God." Exodus 3:6.
"And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." Exodus 3:14.

"I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." John 8:24.
"Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." John 8:58.

The present moment for man is fleeting and transient.
How can we stop time and live in the swiftness of the present?
Man does not have this power.
However good or bad the event may be, the present slips through our hands like water between our fingers.
Time passes inexorably for man.
We are generally what we once were, or what we will be.
What we are now depends on what we were before, and our hopes reside in what we will be one day.
Ask an old man, "Who are you?" and probably he will answer, "I am what I was."
Ask a young man, "Who are you?" and probably he will answer, "I am what I will be."
Man lives in the present, but he is not master of the present. We have no dominion over time.
God is Lord of time.
For God, there is no "I was" or "I will be."
"I AM THAT I AM".
If God is omnipresent, this does not only mean being in all places, but also in all times, or in all "presents".

Read Luke 20:27-40.
"And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For He is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him." Luke 20:34-40.

It is difficult for man to understand this, but God has dominion over time.

God knows what is to come, and although He has given man the power to choose from an infinite number of paths, God knows beforehand which path he will choose. But this is not a mere prediction of events, but rather authority over the dimension of time.

What is a distant future for man is a consummated past for God: "Those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead... are like angels, and are children of God, being children of the resurrection"; and what is past for man is present for God, "for to him all are alive." Jesus is a time traveler. Just read Revelation to understand this.

Read chapter 21 of Revelation.

“And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.” Revelation 21:5-7.

The book of Revelation was written in the past.

The impression we get is that John didn't just have a vision but was caught up and transported through time, actually seeing the events unfold as they happened.

"It is done"

For God, it has already happened. It is a fait accompli.

"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end"

Man **was** the Alpha and **will be** the Omega of his existence. But God **is**.

“I AM THAT I AM”

God is eternal, and being eternal means not only having no end, but also having no beginning. This is not something that man can conceive, limited in his three-dimensionality. God has other dimensions that have not been granted to us. One of them is the dimension of time.

The doctrine of predestination is often conceived in a human and limited way. The fact is that God is not simply limited to charting destinies or planning events, since He has complete and total dominion over time. God is omnipresent, even in all presents. Physically speaking, we could say that time is a limiting factor for man, but not for God. Some brothers mistakenly reject the doctrine of predestination, believing it suggests that man lacks free will and has been pre-programmed. This does not correspond to reality, because man, having been created in the likeness of God, has dominion over his will. And it is upon this will of man that God does his work.

“I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him. That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past.” Ecclesiastes 3:14-15.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.” John 5.25.

The Word of Jesus presents us with precisely this theme: man must stop following his own will and begin to fulfill God's will. Cease being a creature and become a child of God. You have the power to choose this path. Even if God already knows what you will do (because, for Him, it has already happened), this does not mean that your will is not valid. God is not only interested in your path, but primarily in your will. And God's will be precisely that man renounce the desire to be "like God," doing his own will, and become a child of God, doing His will.

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” Mathew 7:21.

God is Lord of time.
Time is not the master of God.
Man is the master of his will.
But the will of the child of God is to do the Father’s will.

THE FATHER’S WILL

Read Chapter 20 of Exodus, Chapter 6 of Deuteronomy, and Mark 12:28-34.

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Matthew 6:10.

"For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Matthew 12:50.

"Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." Matthew 18:14.

"Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." Matthew 21:31.

"Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." John 7:16-17.

"And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." Matthew 26:39.

"Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." Luke 22:42.

"For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. John 6:38-40.

"Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." Luke 22:42.

""And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." Luke 12:47.

"Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." John 4:34.

"Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God: Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying.." John 8:54-55.

There is no secret to pleasing God.
Simply do His Will.
It was by doing God's Will that Jesus was glorified in God as Our Lord.
And like Jesus, it is by doing God's Will that we become His children.
Denying oneself is abandoning one's own will to carry out God's Will.
In the Age of Law, this was manifested through sacrifices and burnt offerings. It was by no means the will of the people of Israel to sacrifice their best animals. But this was done because it was God's Will. God was pleased with the sacrifices not for the sacrifice itself, but because, through the sacrifice, His people did His Will, showing their faith and confirming their submission. God blessed them for this, just as He blesses us when we also do His will, keeping and spreading His Word. This is what Jesus came to do among us.

IF ANY MAN SERVE ME, LET HIM FOLLOW ME

Read Matthew 9:35-38.

"Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest." Matthew 9:37-38

WORKERS NEEDED!

Jesus is the one putting up this sign.
Jesus needs workers.
The crowds are distressed and exhausted like sheep without a shepherd.
Who wants to lead this flock?
Who is willing to do this work?
Who is fit for this job?

Read Luke 9:57-62.

"And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. Luke 9:62.

What are you looking at?
What are you exchanging the harvest for?
What payment do you expect to receive from this?
What fruit will you reap from this?
Don't put your hand to the plow before you are sure of what you intend to do.
Are you ready to submit to God's rule (kingdom)?

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour." John 12:24-26.

Are you still in doubt?
What is your choice?
How about being alone, in the middle of the crowd?
What kind of life do you want to preserve?
Do you want to be honored by the Father?
Serve Jesus! Follow Jesus!
The road is narrow, but it leads in the right direction.

Read Luke 14:25-35

"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?"

Are you truly willing?
Not everyone is fit for the kingdom of God.
To bear fruit, it is necessary to die.
To win in the spiritual realm, it is necessary to renounce material dominion.
It is necessary to give up your life.
It is necessary to renounce.
It is necessary to leave empty spaces in your heart.
And the empty spaces must be filled by Jesus.
What are you passionate about? Truly passionate?
Can you exchange this for Jesus?
If not, sit down and calculate if with ten thousand men you can defeat twenty thousand.
Rethink your priorities.
Spirit or matter? Soul or body?

"So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Luke 14:33-35.

Have you been called to the harvest field?
Have you begun to plow the land?

Have you begun to bear fruit?
Have you begun to feel and taste God?
Some people think this is enough for salvation.
Is being called enough?

Read Matthew 20:1-16.

"Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" Matthew 20:15.

Divine designs are unfathomable to the limited understanding of man.

When we question God, we are, first of all, failing to recognize His authority, His sovereignty, His wisdom, His power, and His ownership over all creation.

Whoever believes in the One God, Lord and Creator of all, automatically acknowledges His sovereignty and never questions Him. Whoever questions their Lord is doubting His power. Despite believing in His existence, they do not believe in His designs. The sinner was called to the vineyard, but regretted having worked all day. In his mind, it would have been better if he had remained idle and at the end of the day, gone to work a little. He would have earned the same. He was interested in earning a little by working.

"Take that thine is, and go thy way..." Matthew 20:14.

A day's work in the vineyard serves the Lord's purpose of getting to know the worker.

It is through this first day of work that the Lord of the vineyard will choose those whom He will employ permanently. Whoever begins work and finds it tiring longs for leisure. He has not repented of his sin. He tried to get out of it, but his heart would not let him. This one will not be chosen.

"So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen." Matthew 20:16.

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." John 3:14-21.

What kind of work do you do?
What kind of fruit do you have to offer God?
Is your work worthy of being in darkness or of being displayed in the light?
This is the judgment of the Light.
The fact that you have been touched by the Spirit does not mean that you are saved.
Your fruit will still be evaluated.
If you, having touched the plow, look back, you are not worthy of the kingdom of God.
The branch that, being in the vine, does not bear fruit is cut off and thrown away.
Many are called (to the work), but few are chosen.

Read chapter 15 of John.

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." John 15:1-4.

One of the biblical doctrines that presents the most difficulties to the limited understanding of man is the doctrine of Predestination.

When analyzed from a merely human and temporal point of view, it can generate doubts, erroneous interpretations, and even be dangerous for those who cling to it to justify their own inaction. This happens because man does not have dominion over time and is limited by its course, unlike God

who has control and complete dominion over time. What is yet to happen for us has already happened for Him. And it is only in this sense that the doctrine of Predestination should be understood by man.

Many people believe that because they have been touched by the Spirit, they are automatically saved. Once in the body of Christ, they can no longer lose their Salvation. Beware!

"So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen." Matthew 20:16.

Jesus is a way. And as a way, He must be followed throughout our lives. If we stray from this path, we will be lost again, proving to ourselves that even though we were called, we were not chosen. Even though we were in the vine, we were uprooted because we were not bearing fruit. Do not become complacent. Remain in the vine. Produce fruit for Jesus. Do not stray from the path.

"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." John 13:17.

MINISTERS OF THE WORD

Read Matthew 10:1-42.

Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him. Psalms 2:11-12

"Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word." Luke 1:1-2.

Jesus does not call us to a contemplative life! He calls us to work!

All the work done for Jesus revolves around one aspect: ministering His Word!

The Savior's Word salts and flavors the Earth!

The Savior's Word illuminates the path!

All the other important ordinances of Jesus, such as feeding the hungry, quenching the thirsty, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, healing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing lepers, casting out demons, revolve around the preaching of the Word, because without the Word of Jesus, none of this is achieved, since the Word of Jesus is the very instrument by which all these ordinances can be fulfilled. And the ministry of the Word is the ultimate goal of all charitable ministry.

But we cannot serve the Lord carelessly. We must serve with fear, and with joy, but yet with trembling, because Our Lord is demanding of His servants, in the same way that He is merciful.

The Lord's promise is that He Himself will be with us, doing the work through us. The greatest reward for our work is the Lord's own presence in our lives, through the instrumentality of His Word. Thus, the Lord will be granting us the privilege of making our humble contribution to the building of the Kingdom of God.

"Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. Luke 14:34-35.

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." Matthew 5:13.

"For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another." Mark 9:49-50.

"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matthew 5:14-16.

"And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease." Matthew 10:1.

“Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.” John 20:21-23.

“Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.” Mark 16:14-18

THE WEDDING GARMENT

Read Matthew 22:1-14

“And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.” Matthew 22:11-14.

Very intriguing in this parable is the spiritual meaning of this "wedding garment”.

In this parable, there are two clues about its meaning: the first is that the King calls the man "friend." The second clue is that the man "became mute."

By "friend," it is suggested that the man was not a "stranger" to the Christian environment. By association, perhaps someone who frequented some Christian environment, but not sufficiently intimate with the Word of Jesus to be unable to reproduce it, since he "became mute." In this interpretation, the wedding garment would be the Word of Jesus kept in the heart of the Christian. Many want to associate the wedding garment with works or ecclesiastical titles, but Jesus made it very clear, in other parables, that this interpretation can be too simplistic. It may be that the meaning of the wedding garment is much more complex and that the effort to keep the Word of Jesus is only the initial step in the process.

God seeks true worshippers who worship Him in spirit and in truth. God is interested in those who work to help the suffering and the little ones. But God is also interested in the reasons why they help the suffering and the little ones. Not only that: God is also interested in the state of heart of those who help the suffering and the little ones. In short, Love is still the first, second, and third most important Divine Laws for God and for us.

Do you like being invited to parties? Many are invited to the King's party, but you can't wear just anything.

Still without a wedding garment? Don't be silent like our friend. Start now to keep the Word of Jesus and don't make a fool of yourself at the banquet.

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. John 4:23.

“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Matthew 26:41 and Mark 14:38.

“FRIEND, WHEREFORE ART THOU COME?”

Matthew 26:47-56.

“And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.”

People seek Jesus for a variety of reasons.

Some seek material blessings.

Some need comfort to cope with their emotional anguish.

Some seek fellowship with respected church members.
Some seek justification for their sinful ways.
Some aim for social or material advancement.
Some need a job or money.
Some seek Jesus to arrest and crucify Him... again!
"Friend, why have you come?"
Keep this Word of the Lord!
If the temptation to promote discord, judgment, or undue condemnation among the members of Christ's Church is knocking at the doors of your heart, think about this!
Do not crucify Jesus again.
Have care, affection, and love for His disciples and servants. Even those who have erred and failed.
They, too, are children of God, and Jesus knows how to forgive and wash away their sins.
Be careful with your tongue. It is through the tongue that Satan does his work.

"Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned. Matthew 12:33-37.

MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR THEE

One of the most widespread concepts throughout the Bible is that of God's grace.

"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." Genesis 6:8.

"And the LORD said unto Moses, **I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name."** Exodus 33:17.

"For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Psalms 84:11.

"And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand." Genesis 39:4.

From Hebrew, the term חן (pronounced "chen") is translated into Portuguese as "grace" or "mercy." It is translated as "grace" to designate the "grace of God" to man, and as "mercy" to designate the "grace" of man to man.
The idea of "grace" is that it is undeserved. Human beings cannot "buy" divine favor through their own works. On the contrary, grace is a gift bestowed by God, motivated by His love and His benevolence. However, paradoxically, human beings can **"find grace"** in God's eyes.

"And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him. Luke 2:40.

The word "grace" in Greek is **χάρις** (pronounced "charis"). At its root, the term carries the meanings of "undeserved favor" and "free gift." Paul, as a former persecutor of Christians, personally reached by Jesus, knew this concept well:

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." Ephesians 2:8-9

"And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." 2 Corinthians 12:9.

The word **"charis"**, recorded in the New Testament and spoken by Jesus, appears only in the second epistle to the Corinthians. However, the idea of "grace" is taught by Jesus in the Gospels and repeated several times by his disciples throughout the narratives and instructions of the New Testament. In the instruction to the disciples, the term more related to "grace" is not **"charis"**, but **"dorean"**, a noun meaning "gift" or "present."

“And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give (dōrean elabete, dōrean dote).” Mateus 10:7-8.

Although they have very similar and even interchangeable meanings, in his instruction to the apostles, Jesus emphasizes the gratuitous nature of the gift, that is, Jesus' explicit instruction that his ministers should not charge "fees" from those they minister to when working in the harvest (just as Jesus never charged anyone). This doesn't mean the workers aren't rewarded for their work. But the best payment is that made by the Lord of the Harvest, not by those who have been graced by God's gift.

We can see that the term Grace is used in two senses: the Grace of God granted to man and the Grace that man bestows upon his fellow man.

But how do we attain God's Grace?

How do we find Grace in His eyes?

How do we always remain under His Grace?

Read in Luke 15.11-32, the parable of the prodigal son.

“And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.” Luke 15:31.

Now read Matthew 18:23-35: the parable of the compassionate servant.

“So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.” Matthew 18:23-35.

In the Parable of the Prodigal Son, God is the loving and compassionate Father. We are the children. In the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, Jesus places God in the position of the powerful king. We are the creditors.

God is the Almighty Creator.

But He is Father.

He has the power, He has the authority. Dominion belongs to Him.

But He is Father.

We are only His creatures.

But He is Father.

To the Creator we owe everything we have, and even everything we are.

If God decides to collect from us the debt we owe Him, nothing will remain for us, for we owe Him everything.

Everything we have and are we receive by the grace of God.

Everything we have and are we receive with the grace of God.

But, even though God is Father, this grace can be withdrawn.

Grace withdraws when we leave His presence.

Grace withdraws when we fail to forgive our brother. (After all, God is Father to all, not just to us.)

Grace withdraws when we are in sin.

Grace withdraws when we judge that we do not need God.

When we consider ourselves self-sufficient, theoretically, we no longer need His grace.

When we assume the position of "gods," we reject His grace.

When we choose to follow our own path, we are turning away from His grace.

Grace is the Presence of the Father in our lives.

Grace is the "reigning" of God in our hearts.

THE PROMISE OF MY FATHER

“And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.” Luke 24:49.

Read Genesis 12:1-9.

“Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will

bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Genesis 12:1-3.

Read Genesis chapters 15, 16, and 17.

"And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness." Genesis 15:5-6.

"This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised." Genesis 17:10.

"And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year." Genesis 17:19-21.

One of the most striking characteristics of the Jewish people is segregation.

Despite living among all nations, they rarely marry people who are not Jewish. Unlike other religions that are always looking to make new converts, Judaism hardly even admits the presence of people who are strangers to its cults and ceremonies. The Temple in Jerusalem itself boasts the famous Court of the Gentiles, through which foreigners cannot pass. What then can be said of the ritual of circumcision, established as a covenant by God, considered essential for conversion to Judaism?

But where does God's promise fit in? **"in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."?**

Abraham is considered the patriarch of the Jews.

God's promise was made to Abraham, but God's covenant was established through Isaac. Not all of Abraham's children were graced with God's blessing. Ishmael, Abraham's son with his servant Hagar, also formed a great nation, but not of Jews, but of Arabs, who today perfectly fit the biblical prophecy made about them:

"And the angel of the LORD said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction. And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." Genesis 16:10-12.

Read Gênesis 22:1-19.

"And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together." Genesis 22:7-8.

"And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." Genesis 22:16-18.

In the sacrifice of Isaac, there is much more than meets the eye.

Abraham's faith and obedience to God were tested and praised.

Abraham, in a way, redeemed Adam's disobedience, who could not fulfill a simple command. The only command God had given him.

Abraham was about to sacrifice his only legitimate son in obedience to God's command. Over this faith, he received a **PROMISE**.

But in this whole context, there was someone who had much more faith than Abraham.

A boy, docile as a lamb, who carried the wood, allowed himself to be bound and placed on God's altar. Over this faith, this boy received a **COVENANT.**

God did not allow the sacrifice of Isaac; on the contrary, He allowed him to live to father the entire Jewish nation.

But God's commitment did not end there.

For the redemption of mankind, a human sacrifice was still necessary.

A ram found with its horns caught in the bushes did not, under any circumstances, replace the sacrifice of Isaac.

"My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together." Genesis 22:8.

In this prophetic language, three prophecies are fulfilled in Abraham's response. The first is obvious: **God sent the lamb for the sacrifice**. The second is the way Abraham called Isaac: "**My son,**" and the third is that they "**went both of them together.**" God substituted the ransom for man's sin, not with a ram caught by its horns in a thicket, but **with His own Son, Jesus.** The third prophecy is that the Father (God) and the Son (Jesus) **came together on this mission**. This lamb was the Son of God: Jesus Christ.

"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John the Baptizer in John 1:29.

By offering his own Son, as a man, for sacrifice, God was substituting the sacrifice of Isaac. God himself could not be less holy than Abraham. If Abraham had faith to the point of sacrificing his own son, by that same faith, he would be saved. He and all who were with him believed in the sacrifice of the Son of God.

"And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." Luke 24:49.

God's **promise** to Abraham (and not the **covenant** with Isaac) was extended to Christians after Jesus' sacrifice. It is upon this promise made to Abraham, crystallized in this sacrifice between Father and Son, that our belief and our faith reside. It is in this **sacrifice of the "self,"** made out of love and faith in God, that the salvation of man is found. Now, in this sacrifice, **"shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice."** Genesis 22:18.

Read in Matthew 21:28-46 the parable of the two sons and the parable of the wicked tenants.

"Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." Mathew 21:41-44.

Read Chapter 23 of Matthew.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Mathew 23: 37-39.

The Jews are still waiting for the Messiah. However, God no longer dwells in the temple of Jerusalem.

Even the Ark of the Covenant is lost.

Despite this, the people of Israel still have faith, and continue to be God's people. The people of the God who still waits for them and for their conversion to the Lord Jesus.

When this happens, Jesus will return to Earth.

SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN TO COME UNTO ME

Read Chapter 1 from the Gospel of Luke.

As the Son of Man, our Lord was also a child.

Jesus' childhood, as well as his entire life, serves as an example for us. As disciples, servants, and also as parents.

Even as a child, and without uttering a single word, Jesus gives us a Word, through the care with which his coming into the world and his spiritual development in childhood were prepared.

Jesus' life as the Son of Man was consecrated to God even before his conception. Jesus was not born for the world, much less for his parents. Jesus was conceived for God.

This fact was fully known to Mary, his mother.

"And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her." Luke 1:38

And what about us? Do we raise children for the world, for ourselves, or for God?
What kind of expectations do we have for our children?
What do we expect from our children?
What do we hope for our children?
To whom do we want to consecrate our children?
"What seek ye" for your children?

Read Exodus chapters 12 and 13.
Read Luke 2:1-38.

"Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine." Exodus 13:2

Jesus is Mary's firstborn.
The consecration of firstborn sons to God has a special meaning for the Jews.
The tenth plague that God unleashed upon Egypt was the death of the firstborn.
All the firstborn of Egypt, except those whose parents obeyed God's commands, were killed. The Pharaoh of Egypt had nine chances to believe in the Word of God. He failed to believe in the Word, so he was forced to believe in the death of his firstborn son. The conclusion we draw is that if the father does not believe in the Word of God, the death of the child is better than damnation in hell.

"But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." Matthew 18.6.

Did the firstborn sons killed in Egypt have any guilt or sin? Apparently not. But they were not redeemed by their parents with the blood of the lamb. They were redeemed by God himself, through the action of the angel of death. Better death than remaining under the care of unbelieving parents.
The tenth plague did not occur by chance. It was part of God's plan, prophesying in a way the sacrifice of Jesus.
The sacrifice of Isaac (Abraham's firstborn) was also a test of faith (Genesis 22:1-19). This test was necessary for the father of a people who should believe in the sacrifice of the firstborn.
God sacrificed his firstborn for the redemption of man's sins.
In order for us to be included in this salvation, we need to believe in this fact.
Note the analogy:
Jesus is Mary's firstborn.
Jesus is God's firstborn.

Jesus is the very Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.
God's firstborn was consecrated by sacrifice for the redemption of mankind's sins.
Moses received an express order from God that every firstborn Israelite should be redeemed through the sacrifice of a lamb. This was so that the Israelite nation would remember how God's hand acted in the liberation that occurred in Egypt.
And just as God consecrated the sacrifice of his son to us, so too does He expect, indeed commands, that we consecrate our firstborn to Him.
We then ask a crucial question: Who is the firstborn?
Is the spiritual concept of firstborn equivalent to the biological or secular concept?
Biologically, the firstborn is the first child conceived in the mother's womb.
"Cousin" means "first" and "born" means "begotten."
When asking Moses to consecrate the firstborn, the Lord defined them biologically:

Let's take some examples of firstborn sons from the Bible.

Read Genesis chapter 4.

The first son born to Adam and Eve was Cain.
Biologically, Cain is the firstborn of Adam and Eve.
However, Cain was cursed by God for killing his brother Abel. He and all his descendants were condemned, being eliminated from the earth at the time of the flood. Adam's descendants were consequently established through his third son, Seth. From Seth's descendants would come Noah,

who after the flood would repopulate the earth. The blessed generation was then that of Seth, who, according to the Israelite concept, would be the genealogical firstborn. Not the first to be born to the parents, but the first of the generation. In this sense, the term genealogical firstborn would have a retrospective concept, designating the first man in a genealogical tree originating from him, and not the first son of the couple. This is the Jewish concept, but it still doesn't fully correspond to the spiritual meaning of the term firstborn. Note also that in the Jewish idea, the firstborn is always a man, the son of a man; and also that it doesn't matter who the father is, or if he is his father's firstborn son, as long as he is his mother's firstborn son.

"Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine." Exodus 13:2

Let's look at some more biblical examples of firstborn sons, this time in Genesis chapters 16 and 17.

Abraham's biological firstborn is Ishmael, conceived in the womb of Hagar, his Egyptian servant.

Ishmael was conceived after God's promise to Abram that he would have a son whose descendants would be innumerable (Genesis 15:1-6). And so it happened with Ishmael. In retrospect, Ishmael is one of the **genealogical firstborn of the Arab nation** (Genesis 25:12-18).

"And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year." Genesis 17: 20-21

After Ishmael's birth, God changes Abram's name to Abraham, and Sarai's to Sarah. God then makes another promise, not to Abraham, but to Sarah:

"And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her." Genesis 17:16.

Note that God blessed Ishmael, but the covenant was made with Isaac, through Sarah.

Sarah's biological firstborn is Isaac, with whom God established the covenant. Isaac is not Abraham's **biological firstborn,** but Isaac is considered the **genealogical firstborn** of the Israelite nation.

After the institution of the covenant of circumcision, Abraham circumcised himself and his son Ishmael on the same day. Ishmael's consecration to the Lord through circumcision, however, did not prevent Isaac's **spiritual firstborn**, since he was the Sarah's firstborn, which whom God stablished His promise.

Read Genesis 22, verses 1-18.

When requesting the sacrifice of Isaac, the angel of the Lord considers him Abraham's "only son." Since the Bible itself attributes Ishmael's paternity to Abraham, there are two possibilities for why he was thus ignored. The first would be that God considered Ishmael spiritually dead, not having been consecrated to Him (despite having been circumcised). The second possibility is that Ishmael was considered Abram's son and not Abraham's. After the establishment of the covenant (Genesis 17), Abraham became a "new creature," losing the spiritual identity of the "old man" who, considered spiritually dead, would have left Ishmael spiritually orphaned.

Isaac's consecration to God through the human sacrifice (which did not take place) reminds us of the concept of spiritual primogeniture.

"As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;" Luke 2:23.

"Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine." Exodus 13:2.

"You shall not delay to offer from the fullness of your harvest and from the outflow of your presses. The firstborn of your sons you shall give to me." Exodus 22:29.

"Because all the firstborn are mine; for on the day that I smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto me all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast: mine shall they be: I am the LORD." Numbers 3:13.

Let's analyze the word "firstborn" from another angle.

It's a word formed simply by juxtaposing two other words, without any indication of how they relate: "First" and "born".

However, who is "The First"? Who is "The Alpha"? Who is "The Root"? Who is "The Principal"?

It would be God himself.

Firstborn, in spiritual language, as God seems to conceive it, may also mean "**born for the First,**" or "**consagrated for the First,**" or, in the case of Jesus, "**begotten by the First,**" identifying all those who "**are consecrated to God,**" or all those who are **"born of God."** In the spiritual definition of the term, it would be all those who are "**sons of the First,**" or "**sons of God,**" regardless (in the biological sphere) if they were the firstborn of a man, but whether they were the firstborn of a woman.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3.

Because he was consecrated to God, Isaac is considered Abraham's spiritual firstborn, even though he was not his biological firstborn.

There are several examples in the Bible of conflict between biological primogeniture and spiritual primogeniture. The most illustrative is the story of Isaac's sons, Esau and Jacob (Genesis Chapters 25, 27, and 28).

By the biological definition ("everything that opens his mother's womb"), Isaac's firstborn would be Esau. A series of events then occurred, resulting in Esau's birthright being transferred to Jacob (Esau despised his birthright, selling it to Jacob in exchange for food; Esau married a woman who did not belong to Abraham's people; Isaac gave his blessing to Jacob, thinking it was Esau). God then established his covenant with Jacob, changing his name to Israel (new birth), and making him the patriarch of the Israelite nation (Genesis 28). In this way, God's promise is passed down from generation to generation, until it reaches Jesus:

"And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Genesis 28:13-14.

Continue reading chapter 2 of Luke until the end.

"And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Luke 2:49.

Our children belong to the Lord.

It is our obligation to understand this and make every effort so that, from an early age, they may attend the house of our Heavenly Father and hear His Word.

As parents, we have been delegated obligations and responsibilities towards human beings that, in analytical terms, could only be exercised by God Himself.

Parents serve as "gods" in their children's lives.

As children, our kids are our spiritual heirs, and their spiritual situation depends on us.

Let us follow the example of Abraham. Let us first have faith in God and consecrate our children to Him. Far be it from us to follow the example of the Pharaoh of Egypt, who, for lack of faith, raised children for perdition. Consecrating children to the Lord and instructing them in His law are clear commands and are part of God's plan. Read Deuteronomy chapter 6.

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Deuteronomy 6:4-7.

There are people who try to avoid the responsibility of leading their children to God, claiming that children are immature or do not yet have enough responsibility to choose the type of "religion" they should follow. I fully agree: if parents lack the necessary firmness in God, it will be impossible for their children to understand the importance of the Word. If, on the other hand, parents are building their home on the rock that is the Word of Jesus, there will be no "religion" that will lead them astray from the Lord's path.

Jesus was circumcised, consecrated as the firstborn, taken to the temple, and educated in the wisdom and law of the Lord, **"and the grace of God was upon him."**

“And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.” Luke 2:40.

Jesus' development during his childhood was also a valuable example.
Not only for children, but especially for parents.
Joseph and Mary were faithful servants of the Lord.

Read Luke 18:15-17.

“But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.” Luke 18:16-17.

As those responsible for their children, parents must continue and confirm this relationship of Wisdom and Grace with their children.

But for this to happen, it is necessary that the parents, in turn, have found this Wisdom and that they have also found Grace before God.

But if parents do not walk in God's ways, how can they expect their children to?

If parents do not seek God's Wisdom, how can they expect their children to seek it?

If parents do not place their faith and trust in the Lord, how can they expect their children to do so?

If parents have not consecrated themselves as servants of the Lord, how can they consecrate their children?

Read Matthew 18:1-14.

“And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 18.3.

““Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.” Matthew 18:10

Consecrating children to God is a task explicitly stated in the Bible for every parent.

It signifies the covenant of faith of circumcision.

It signifies the covenant of faith of the sacrifice of Isaac.

It signifies the covenant of faith in the passing of the angel of death through the homes of Egypt.

It signifies a covenant of responsibility, in which parents commit themselves to educating their children in the law of the Lord, according to the ordinance given to Moses.

It signifies the covenant of faith in the sacrifice and consecration of Jesus, the firstborn of God.

Some churches usually consecrate children through infant baptism, or simply through a ceremony of presentation to the body of Christ.

Infant baptism has always been historically performed by the church of Christ until the 14th century, when it was questioned by the Anabaptists, who reserved the sacrament of Baptism only for those who were fully capable of exercising faith.

Parents who present their children to God (whether through Baptism or consecration) must be fully aware of the commitment they are making through this act and all that is involved in it. If this is not the case, they will only be performing an ecclesiastical ritual, thus giving credence to the arguments of the 16th-century Anabaptists.

Parents who consecrate their children to God are committing themselves to keeping their home on the Lord's path.

But the consecration of our children to God is not a ceremony performed only with the child. On the contrary, it has a very important focus on the parents.

The consecration happens for both the parents and the child. The Spirit blesses everyone, but at the moment it is performed, the water baptism of children represents much more for the parents, aware of their responsibilities, than for the child, who does not understand what is happening. The consecration of children to God does not happen only during a liturgical ceremony, but in everyday life, through the example of behavior and through the Word ministered to the child by the parents. The consecration of children to God is a covenant of mutual commitments, in which parents commit themselves before the Lord to keep their children on the Path of Truth.

“Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.” Matthew 18:14.

“Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” Matthew 25:40.

“Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.” Matthew 25:45.

God maintains an intimate and special relationship with children.

Ensuring that this relationship continues is the obligation of their parents.

And whatever we are doing or failing to do to keep the little ones on the path of the Lord is not being done only for them, but for Jesus himself.

A consecration ceremony is not enough. More is needed.

An example is needed. Time is needed. Investment is needed. A converted heart is needed. The children are here and are our responsibility, which will be demanded of us.

Read Luke 1:8-23

“And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” Luke 1-17.

John the Baptist came to **“turn the hearts of the fathers to the children.”** This is the exact spiritual meaning of infant baptism. When parents, with converted hearts, teach their children to keep the Word of Jesus, they are precisely **“baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”** The living water that really baptizes is the very Word of Jesus.

Read Matthew 21:14-17.

“And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise.” Matthew 21:16.

“Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.” Psalm 8:2.

The subtlety of Jesus' answers is truly embarrassing.

After his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus continued to give proof of his Divine nature, healing the blind and the lame. But even so, the priests and scribes did not accept him as the Messiah. Jesus knew their hearts and their hypocrisy. He had already condemned the rigor with which they assumed the exposition of the Law to oppress their brothers. Jesus was the Liberator, but he had not come to liberate the Jews from the Romans, but from their priests.

The priests were indignant, after all, "**Hosanna**" was a greeting reserved for the Savior. However, they could not see something so obvious that even the children had already recognized. Jesus really was the Savior, but who were his enemies? Who would crucify him?

The indignant priests' question to Jesus was malicious: **“Hearest thou what these say?”** As if they were asking: “Look, Jesus, you are pretending to be God, and the children are getting things confused. The children think you are the Lord! What now? How do we correct this misconception? We believe you are not God. Tell them, then, who you are.”

The idea of the little ones was absolutely correct. Jesus had come to save. And this had already been preached. The wrong idea was the priests'. The question to be answered, then, was not "who is Jesus?", but rather "who are the priests?" To do this, Jesus asked them: **“Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?”** Of course, they had never read this. In fact, what they had read was: **“Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.”** The priests then understood that Jesus was referring to them as enemies and avengers, and as the prophecy stated, they were truly silenced by the power that came from the mouths of children. This answer was so subtle that only those who knew the scriptures deeply could understand its intention and meaning. However, for those who (even without such erudition) already believed in Jesus, a new Word was being ministered. Not a Word of hatred and vengeance, but a Word of Grace and Praise.

FOR A GOOD TREE BRINGETH NOT FORTH CORRUPT FRUIT

Read Luke 6:43-45 and Matthew 12:33-37.

“For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.” Luke 6:43.

"O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Matthew 12:34.

"But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Matthew 12:36-37.

Continuing along this line of interpretation of the spiritual meaning of Jesus' Word, we have clearly seen, through various passages, that **when Jesus refers to the fruit**, he has in mind **the word spoken by man.**

Modern man tends to give very little value to the spoken word.

We are not accustomed to meditating on the consequences that words can have.

Often, we do not think before we speak, especially when the subject is unfamiliar to us.

Many times, we utter unfounded, reckless opinions, or even outright slander, which simply pass through our minds, but which do not need proof to reach the ears of a third person.

What has been the fruit of your mouth?

What has sprouted from your heart?

How much has Jesus changed your heart, so that it may be a garden of flowers, and not a thicket of thistles?

Some brothers preach salvation by works.

But what is a good work worth to God if it is accompanied by a bad word?

What good is it for a prophet to perform wonders and miracles if the Word of Jesus does not accompany him? "By their fruits you will know them."

For Almighty God, who can do all things and does all things as He pleases, what are the works of men worth, except to accompany His word?

Be careful with your word.

THE TRUE VINE

Read Mathew 20:1-16

"For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard." Mathew 20:1

Read Matthew 25:14-30.

"For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." Matthew 25:29.

"And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest. Mathew 9:35-38

Read Chapter 15 of John

"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." John 15:2.

"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." John 15:8.

Today, there is a clear division in the world, fueled by socialist/communist doctrines that advocate for equality of goods and wealth among people, the weakening of family unity, and the distortion of meritocracy. Several proponents of these doctrines inconsistently claim that they are justified by the teachings of Jesus. However, Jesus had nothing against capitalism or meritocracy. In fact, several of his parables are built around heads of families, businessmen, and workers (faithful or unfaithful to their employers).

Jesus encourages hard work; however, unlike capitalism, which preaches the accumulation of wealth for the delight of the individual, and socialism/communism, which preaches the enrichment of the State (and the distribution of surpluses to the community), Jesus defends hard work, meritocracy, charity, and the consecration of the fruits for the glory of God the Father.

IS NOT THIS THE FAST THAT I HAVE CHOSEN?

Read chapter 58 from the Isaiah book.

"Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?" Isaiah 58:6.

Read Matthew 17:14-21.

"Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." Matthew 17:21.

Matthew 4:1-11.

"And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred." Matthew 4:2.

"Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." Matthew 6:16-18.

"I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat: And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far." Mark 8:2-3.

It is remarkable how Jesus fasted for forty days in the desert. Luke recounts that Jesus ate nothing during those days, but only became hungry when the forty days were over. If we, ordinary human beings, were to fast, we would surely become hungry, and long before the forty days were over. So we must understand that something was sustaining Jesus. Mark recounts that "angels ministered to him." The same must have happened with Moses. Therefore, a forty-day fast is not for us, poor and miserable sinners, but only for those led to it by the Holy Spirit or by God himself.

Nourishing the body is part of human nature.

Eating is not a sin. Food is a blessing from the Lord and is necessary for our survival.

Jesus himself, in his ministry, recognized this when he multiplied the loaves and observed that, after a three-day fast, people could faint along the way.

So, the first recommendation I make to you is: do not try to fast for forty days. You are neither Jesus nor Moses.

But if eating is something natural within the divine plan, and if food was given to us by God, why would fasting please God? What is the importance of fasting in the kingdom of God? What benefit does fasting bring to the human spirit?

Read Mark 2:8-22.

"And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast." Mark 2:19.

Sometimes our state of mind leads us to fast. Depressed people don't eat. Anorexic people reject food. But if we are not seeking God during the fast, it has no value. Often, the Jews used fasting as a way to draw God's attention to their problems and anxieties (read chapter 12 of 2 Samuel).

"But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Matthew 4.4.

Being with the bridegroom and being without the bridegroom. That is the great difference.

Those who live a full life with Jesus, keeping His Word, being a dwelling place of the Spirit and serving Him as a channel of evangelization; those who love God and their neighbor in the way Jesus taught, do not need to fast.

On the other hand, those who are in sin; living with lies, animosity, or anger; those who judge and condemn their neighbor; those who cannot forgive or give; those who live with eyes full of adultery; these, yes, need fasting.

We need to keep in mind that fasting is not just abstaining from food. Rather, it is a state of mind whose main characteristic is abstaining from sin, accompanied by repentance and the intention to abandon it.

There is no value in fasting that coexists with sin. Nor in fasting that has not been motivated by repentance for sin. There is also no value in fasting that is not done in the name of Jesus and in prayer; But above all, fasting that does not replace material food with spiritual food, which is the Word of God, is worthless.

Fasting from food is a way for the sinner to show God that something important is missing in his life. Those who fast need the bridegroom. Those who fast are crying out to God for an intervention in their lives.

But it is not enough to simply abstain from food. It is necessary to abstain from sin, to pray, and to **nourish oneself with the Word**. Repentance and a firm purpose to change one's life are necessary. All this, preferably in secret. Then fasting will have value in the eyes of God, **"and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly".**

I AM THE RESURRECTION, AND THE LIFE

Read John 11:1-46.
John 12:9-19.
John 5:19-47.

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" John 11:25-26.

"And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth." John 11:41.

Believing in the resurrection of Lazarus is a **key point** of faith in Jesus. Believing in Jesus doesn't simply mean believing in His existence, but also believing in His power and the power of His Word.

False prophets also perform miracles, drawing crowds, but there is one thing they would never be able to do: resurrect the decomposing dead.

Elijah (1 Kings 17:17-24), Elisha (2 Kings 4:8-37 and 2 Kings 13:20-21), and even Jesus had already resurrected recently deceased people (Luke 8:49-56). Even modern medicine, through its drugs and techniques, can revive patients in cardiorespiratory arrest after a few minutes.

But resurrecting the decomposed dead is something worthy of God. More than that, belief in this power is the basis for faith in the second coming of Jesus and all eschatology according to His Word.

"Believest thou this?"

It's not me asking, but Jesus.
Do you believe that Jesus has the power to raise the dead?
Do you believe that Lazarus had truly been dead for four days?
Do you believe that this is not a lie, nor a deception, nor a hoax, but a powerful work of God?

"I am the resurrection, and the life."

This is what you need to believe!
Resurrection of the dead!
Resurrection of what is decaying.
Resurrection of what has already decomposed.

"I am the resurrection, and the life."
"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto

life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live." John 5:24-25.

"Believest thou this?"

It is in this Word that you need to believe.
Believing in this is the difference between life and death.
It is through this faith that Jesus comes to save.
If you still do not believe in this, or if you are in doubt, Jesus has a Word for you:

Read John 10:22-31.

"But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." John 10:25-27.

Don't have doubts.
Jesus doesn't save those who doubt.
He waits for faith.
He answers the sheep who hear His voice and follow Him.
This is what eternal life consists of.
Believing that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life!

"Believest thou this?"

"And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." John 6:35-40.

"Believest thou this?"

MORE THAN A PROPHET

Read 2 Reis 2:9-14.

"And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." 2 Reis 2:11.

Apparently, Elijah was not a common "mortal" human being. Apparently, it was also not a common "mortal" prophet. There is no description of his death. In fact, there is a description of him going up to heaven in a whirlwind. This demonstrates God's "supernatural" power to cancel death. After this, God himself, through the prophet Malachi, promises his return, "before the day of the Lord."

Read chapters 2 and 4 from Malachi.

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." Malachi 4:5-6

The very last two verses of the Old Testament contain a clear promise from God that He will send back the prophet Elijah (who had ascended alive into heaven by a whirlwind) before the day of the LORD. Behold that the King James Version of the Hebrew covenant translates the name of the prophet as "Elijah", and the translation for the Greek New Testament is "Elias"; however, most translations usually do not change the Hebrew/Greek translations of "Elijah" to " Elias".

Read Matthew 11:1-19.

"But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet." Matthew 11:9

“For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” -15

Jesus' Word is clear enough: John the Baptist was "**more than a prophet.” “And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.”**
“He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

Jesus makes it clear that this is not a teaching "for everyone," but only for those who have ears to hear and are able to receive it. It is not essential knowledge for man's salvation, but rather a spiritual explanation of how the Scriptures are fulfilled and about the power of God. Some people do not believe that God has the power to do this. But this is to impose limits on God's power, elaborating alternative explanations. The Word is clear enough, but not everyone can assimilate it.

“If you receive it” (have ears to hear), John the Baptist **“is Elijah, who was to come”.**

Just as Jesus, who lived before the foundation of the world and became the Son of Man, Elijah, who lived in heaven, became man again, incarnating himself in the figure of John the Baptist to announce the Messiah, just as it was prophesied. Jesus confirmed this. To deny this is to deny the Word of Jesus.

While he was incarnated as John the Baptist, Elijah ceased to be Elijah. Much more than a prophet, he would now be the preparer of the Lord's way. The one who would "make straight in the wilderness a path." The one who had the privilege of baptizing Jesus. He could not be just any man.

Many people see in this confirmation by Jesus a reason to generalize the doctrine of reincarnation. But pay attention: Elijah did not die, but was taken up to heaven. We cannot compare him to a mere “mortal”. One should not generalize from this fact.

And if we believe that God is truly omnipotent, we can calmly accept the fact that He can, if He so desires, reincarnate as a son of man someone who already lived in heaven in communion with Him, just as we believe was done with Jesus himself.

THIS IS MY BELOVED SON: HEAR HIM.

Read Matthew 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-13 and Luke 9:28-36.

“And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering. And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.” Luke 9:29-31.

It is difficult for a man who lives within the limits of the earthly body to understand what occurs on the spiritual plane.

In this biblical passage, we learn that Moses and Elijah lived in communion with the Lord and could even communicate with Him, even though Jesus was in the condition of the Son of Man.

We know that Moses and Elijah were two prophets on earth. Men who lived in communion with God, ministering His Word. Elijah, in fact, was taken up and returned to earth in the form of John the Baptist.

But can we, from this fact, generalize and infer that all men, after the death of the body, begin to live in spirit? And what about the resurrection that Jesus speaks so much about? Let us then hear what He tells us.

THERE BE SOME STANDING HERE, WHICH SHALL NOT TASTE OF DEATH

“Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.” Matthew 16:28.

And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power. Mark 9:1.

“But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.” Luke 9:27.

This teaching of Jesus must have impressed the disciples, as it was recorded in three Gospels. Indeed, the fear of the unknown, triggered by the possibility of death, can haunt anyone's thoughts. But all who were hearing this Word apparently died, or at least their bodies did. The question is what

was the fate of their spirits? Were they immediately taken to heaven? Or were they "tasting the death," awaiting the resurrection?

Do you believe that Jesus lives in heaven?

"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. Luke 9:23-24.

Death is not for everyone.
"Some" will not experience death.
Many are called, but few are chosen.
"Some" are already living in communion with God. **"Some"** already have eternal life.
God's chosen ones do not experience death. But this is for **"Some".** It is not for everyone.
Most people will experience death, resurrection, and judgment.
But how can one become part of this select group?

WHOSOEVER LIVETH AND BELIEVETH IN ME SHALL NEVER DIE

Read again chapter 11 of John and John 5:19-47.

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? John 11:25-26.

"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." John 8:56.

There is no resurrection for those who are alive.
If Jesus resurrects someone, that person must necessarily be dead, or it would not be resurrection.
Some people understand the Word in John 11:26 in the following way:

"Whoever liveth (and therefore is alive) **and believeth in me shall never die"**

But this phrase can be understood in a deeper way, thus having another meaning (for those who have ears to hear):

"Whoever liveth (in me) and believeth (in me) shall never die"

There are two types of believers.
The first is the one who **believes in** Jesus but does not **live in** him. He is not truly a servant, but only a disciple. He believes in Jesus, but **lives for the world**.

This one will pass through death. He will gain life through the resurrection of the Second Coming of Jesus. He will be resurrected and judged according to what he has done: good or evil.
"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." John 5:28-29.

But **some** are not found in the tombs. Like Moses, Elijah, and **some** disciples, they did not experience death and are already in communion with God.

"And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? John 11:26.

Jesus asks Mary if she believes that whoever lives and believes in him **"shall never die"**.
Whoever lives in Jesus, that is, whoever keeps His Word and is a dwelling place of the Spirit of God, **already has eternal life.** They **will not pass through death, nor through resurrection.**

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." John 5:24.

Lets split again another this Jesus' Word:

"I am the resurrection, and (I am) the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth (in me) and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? John 11:25-26.

For most people, Jesus is the **"Resurrection"**.
For some, He is the **"Life".**
Do you already **live in Jesus**, or do you **only believe in Him?**
What will a man give in exchange for his soul?
Whoever already lives in Jesus will not experience death.-
This teaching is subtle, it is **"not for all"**, but it was confirmed by Jesus several times.

Read John 10:22-31.

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." John 10:27-28.

Jesus' true sheep, who recognize and follow His voice, **"they shall never perish."** If they already have life**, why wait for the resurrection?** Follow Jesus as well. Be part of this privileged group. Do not pass through death. Do not wait to be judged in the resurrection. Dedicate yourself to serving this Lord who does not oblige us to anything, but gives us everything in the immensity of His love. Believe and live in Him, and truly belong to Him. No one will snatch you from His hand.

"If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour." John 12:26.

CAST THE NET ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE SHIP

Read John 21:1-14.

"And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes." John 21:6.

In this passage, God, through the instrumentality of Jesus, shows us that there is a right way and a wrong way to work. It also reveals that there is man's way and God's way, demonstrating that man's way is the wrong and unproductive approach, while God's way is the right and productive one. In this world divided between followers of Christ—of every conceivable stripe—and unbelievers—also of every conceivable stripe—there is a spiritually simple definition that distinguishes them into just two groups: those who work from a human perspective and cast their nets to the left side of the boat, and those who obey God and cast their nets to the right side of the boat. Let those who have ears to hear, hear...

LET US GO INTO THE NEXT TOWNS

Read Mark 1:33-39

"And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee." Mark 1:37.

Despite being in the midst of his ministry, preaching, healing, casting out demons, with the whole city gathered at his door, Jesus was not satisfied.
Despite being in full communion with the Father, even so, Jesus made a point of withdrawing during the early morning hours to pray.
This disconcerted the disciples, because even though they had already been chosen and even though they had already found the Messiah, they needed to continue diligently searching for him.
Does this happen to you sometimes?
You are certain one moment that you are with Jesus, and suddenly you don't see him anymore!
If this happens, don't worry. Jesus is like that, He is always walking.
So watch, because if you fall asleep, you will need to look for him again.
And when you find him, do you know what he will say?

“And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth.” Mark 1:38.

Jesus is not satisfied with inactivity. He has a plan like that for you too.
After all, He is **“the Way”.**
If you wake up in the morning and don't find Him, pay attention, He has continued His journey.
Always seek your Master. Always follow your Master. Always be with your Lord.

ALL THAT I HAVE IS THINE

Read Luke 15:11-32.

“And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.” Luke 15:31.

The awareness of God's Sovereignty is a fantastic privilege.
Those who live in God's presence are fully aware of this Sovereignty and become accustomed to depending on the Lord for everything, even the smallest things. Those who live like this are in the situation of the older son in the parable of the prodigal son, who remains in the Father's presence. The older son was not in possession of his goods, but he had everything. What was his was his father's, and what was his father's was his. This is how the true child of God lives.
The younger son had the pleasure of having everything and the irresponsibility of losing everything. When he gave him the inheritance, his father passed on to him the responsibility of taking care of it. But greed and the eagerness to follow his own path and acquire new experiences led him to lose everything. The more he wanted, the more he lost.
The older son had the irresponsibility of having nothing and the pleasure of having everything. His father was responsible for managing his inheritance and providing him with what he needed for his life.
Those who truly believe in God's sovereignty and love, and maintain a fatherly relationship with Him, are in the same situation as the older son in the parable.
But after his younger brother returned, the older son was reluctant to receive him. He knew he was now the sole heir and feared that his father would squander his inheritance on his brother.
It is at this moment that his father comforts him and Jesus delivers his seemingly paradoxical teaching, showing with the father's attitude of receiving the younger brother a parallel with God's attitude of welcoming back the repentant dissolute sinner who is in fact also his son and our brother. Even if we don't perceive it that way.

“Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.” Matthew 5:42.

“I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Acts 20:35.

In this situation, it doesn't matter what we own. Everything that is ours belongs to the Father, and everything that belongs to the Father belongs to us. In true communion with God, there is no place for selfish attachment to material possessions. And if we trust in the Father's faithfulness, we will not mind giving away what has been temporarily placed under our care, especially if it is to help someone in need or a little one, who is also, in truth, a child of our Father and our brother. Helping those in need is also part of the paradox of the older son's responsibility.

RECEIVETH ME

Read Mark 9:33 a 37.

“Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.” Mark 9:35.

Are you looking for Jesus?
It's not difficult to find Him.
Are you looking for God?
He is within your reach.

Our Lord is very near. Much "nearer" than you think.
Jesus is in the children.
This is the right place to look for Him.
In the innocent eyes and hearts that throb with the uncertainty of tomorrow.
In the abandoned children who plead for a piece of affection and bread.
Do not reject them. Jesus is with them. Receive them in His name.
But do not receive them just to receive them, but in the name of Jesus. Be aware and bear witness to this: You are receiving Jesus. Receiving God Himself.
Whoever rejects these children rejects the Lord Himself.
But if you receive them in the name of Jesus, be certain of this: He will manifest Himself to you.

YOUR TIME IS ALWAY READY

Read John 7:1-9.

"Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready." John 7:6.

"Time".
How much time does man have to spare?
God is eternal. He has all the time in the world.
But what about man?
How long can man wait to follow God's Way?
Our time is always present.
To learn or to serve. But it's always time.
Do not delay the Lord's work.
Your time has already come, but it will end.

TAKE HEED THAT NO MAN DECEIVE YOU

Read the chapter 7 of Matthew; chapter 15 of John; Matthew 24:3-14; Mark 13:3-13 and Luke 21:7-19.

"And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. Matthew 24:3-5.

The first sign of the coming times is the presence in the world of false prophets.
Coming in the name of Jesus, they will deceive those who are not truly prepared to receive him.
How to recognize them? Very easy:

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." Matthew 7:15-20.

Outward appearance will not help us distinguish them, since they come **"in sheep's clothing".**
The essential question is: are they in Jesus or not?
What kind of **"good fruit"** should we expect?

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." John 15:1-3.
"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." John 15:7-8.

The first fruit is the Word of the Lord himself.
If the prophet preaches his own word, then he is false!

If you are hearing the Word of the Lord, then it is being preached by the minister of the Word!
Jesus is present. He is the one who preaches!
Don't follow after "prophets"!
Jesus has already prophesied everything that is to come.
Don't follow after "ministers of God"!
God does not send "ministers."
The Word is the one that has ministers. (Luke 1:2)
It is ministered by those who keep it in their hearts.
But it is not enough just to preach.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it." Matthew 7:21-27.

The Word is the rock.
It is not enough to simply build the structure.
It must be built upon the rock.
Otherwise, it will be useless work.

"Not one stone here will be left upon another."
First the rock. Then the structure.
This is **"the condemnation".**

"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." John 3:19-21.

ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION

Read chapter 24 of Matthew.

"And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Matthew 24.2

Read Daniel 9:20-27
"And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." Gabriel Word in the Book of Daniel 9:26-27.

Read Matthew 24:15-28.

"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes." Matthew 24:15-28.

The **"abomination of desolation"** was not a prophecy made solely to foretell the profanation of the temple and the destruction of Jerusalem, but, more importantly, a written prophecy concerning the **"Messiah" (whoso readeth, let him understand)**, whose death serves as the **chronological**

marker for these events. Prophetically, the angel Gabriel divides the prophecies into two parts: the time **before** and the time **after** the Messiah's **death** (note that in the kingdom of God, the death of Jesus is a far more important milestone than his birth). The historical fulfillment of Gabriel's prophecy began in 167 BC, when Jerusalem was invaded by the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who placed a statue of the Greek god Zeus in the Temple and erected an altar for pig sacrifices within the sacred precinct. However, the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD, when General Titus led the Roman armies to lay siege to Jerusalem and the Temple. Yet the destruction of the Temple was itself a prophecy intertwined with that of the "desolate" (the Messiah), for the **"consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."** Jesus, fully aware of the significance of this prophecy, gave it new meaning when He answered the Jews who had asked for a sign:

"Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said." John 2:18-22

Thus, the Word of Jesus confirms Scripture, and Scripture confirms the Word of Jesus. The crucifixion of Jesus by the chosen people was the greatest **abomination** that human beings could have collectively committed, and the fulfillment of this prophecy is the sign God left for the Jews (who believed in Scripture) so that they might also believe in the Word of Jesus. Still in fulfillment of this same prophecy, the greatest **desolation** to befall the Jewish people thereafter was precisely the absence of the Messiah; unrecognized, that left them to tread a desolate path—without their temple, without their sacred relics—as a dispersed people, hated unto death by neighbor nations that were also descendants of Abraham.

BUT THE END IS NOT YET

"And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. Matthew 24:6-13.

Wars, rumors of war, famines, earthquakes. All this is only the beginning of sorrows.
It doesn't even come close to what is really about to happen.
If this is all that is happening, don't be alarmed yet.
Prepare for the coming of the Lord.
Do not practice iniquity.
Do not let love grow cold.
Persevere to the end. Do not give up here.
Before the end, some things are about to happen.

THIS GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come". Matthew 24:14

The Gospel is the good news brought by Jesus.
"This gospel"! Pay close attention. **"This gospel"!**
The Word of the Lord, and not the words of man.
False prophets can preach so many Words registered in the sacred scriptures.
But it may be not **"this gospel"!**
It is **"this gospel"** that must be preached.
It is **"this gospel"** that must be kept in the heart.
It is **"this gospel"** that accomplishes the redemptive work.
Think about this, if you preach the Word of God.

BELIEVE IT NOT!

“Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together. Matthew 24:23-28.

The natural veil that obscures man's vision regarding the Kingdom of Heaven often leads him to believe in the most bizarre—and frequently contradictory (or seemingly contradictory)—things. In an attempt to discern some kernel of truth within interpretations rooted in seemingly reliable structures, people often fall into traps set by the "**false Christs and false prophets**" who roam the world, performing **“great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect”.** But how can one distinguish them? Jesus foretold their coming and gave us a Word that serves as a powerful tool for those who heed it: **“Believe it not!”** Shun the notion of putting your faith in people. Just because they deem themselves "Christians" does not mean they merit credibility. Out of convenience, the natural man prefers to believe the messages of other men rather than trust in the Word of Jesus. By the grace of God and the work of the Holy Spirit, the Word of Jesus is available to most people, printed through the efforts of evangelists. Yet, studying the Word of Jesus requires effort. It is far easier to attend a reputable religious organization where the preacher—under the guise of expounding on a biblical text—embellishes his own words with select references and delivers a message of worldly interest. This causes the believer to waste valuable time that could otherwise be spent internalizing the Word of Jesus. Indeed, it is the Word of Jesus alone that deserves the believer's faith and provides the tools to follow this powerful directive: **“Believe it not!”** The instruction is precisely not to put one's faith in people—no matter how Christian they may appear—for the truth is found only in the Word of Jesus Himself.

THEN SHALL THE END COME

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” Matthew 24:14.

The Son of Man will come a second time once this Gospel of the Kingdom has been proclaimed throughout the whole world.

And when He says "the whole world," this includes all the cities of Israel. Truly, the entire world.

Have you ever heard of Messianic Jews?

They are Jews who accept Jesus as the Messiah.

They maintain their Jewish traditions, worship God in synagogues, and accept Jesus as Savior.

The acceptance of Jesus by the Jews is an essential point for the Second Coming of Jesus.

Conflicts in the Middle East have laid bare the ambition and the lack of wise leadership among people fiercely fighting for the land considered holy by Jews, Muslims, and Christians alike.

The land is holy, but rifles, machine guns, tanks, fighter jets, bombers, hunger, pain, suffering, death, devastation, destitution, widowhood, orphanhood, violence, hatred, lovelessness, ruthlessness, and intransigence can hold nothing holy—especially for those who believe in the existence of a single God, the Creator of all mankind.

People kill their fellow human beings while invoking God’s name. They torture others while invoking God’s name. They commit violence against others while invoking God’s name.

Who might be the “god” behind all this?

Who truly serves the God who says, “Thou shalt not kill”?

What must our true God feel upon witnessing such atrocities?

“O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us.” Daniel 9:16

At the time Daniel received these prophetic dreams, Jerusalem was under the rule of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. These were times of tribulation. The Jewish people were being punished for their lack of faith. These prophecies did not specifically refer to this tribulation, yet the occasion was ripe for their understanding.

"So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, **Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision.** Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright." Daniel 8:17-18.

"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." Matthew 24:15-22.

Jesus describes the **"great tribulation"** as the final and definitive cataclysm—so severe that, were the days not **"shortened"** (by Divine decree), **"should no flesh be saved"**. Coupled with the declaration that **"nor ever shall be"** another tribulation like it, this leads us to envision something as dramatic as—or even more so than—a nuclear detonation, a threat that has loomed over Jerusalem for years **(whoso readeth, let him understand)**. Today, this is precisely the Christian world's greatest concern: that Israel's sworn enemies might gain the operational capability to build a nuclear device, for it is known that they would immediately launch it against Jerusalem—driven by sheer, unbridled hatred. Once the Jews were destroyed, the next natural target for the fury of those co-opted by Muhammad would be the Christians, whom they also regard as "infidels."

As the prophet Daniel understood, the sole purpose of this suffering is to cause God's people to repent of their idolatry and turn back to their God.

"So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision. Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright. And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be. Daniel 9:17-19.

The prophesied tribulation will be so great that Jerusalem will have only one option: to turn once again to the Lord and implore the coming of the Holy One of Israel. No more relying on its own strength.

No more placing faith in tanks, rifles, machine guns, fighter jets, and guided missiles.

Jerusalem will plead for the Messiah.

Where will He be? Where will God be in this desolate sanctuary?

The people of Israel are still waiting for the Messiah.

But the Messiah has already come and was not recognized.

What is the punishment for those who rejected and crucified the Messiah?

Israel awaits a Messiah in human form—a prophet.

They will be deceived. The need for a Savior will be so great that whoever presents himself will be accepted. But this will be the false Christ, who will perform signs and wonders, deceiving many and leading them to ruin. Make no mistake: Jesus will not come to earth again in human form; rather, when He comes, it will be in His glory and majesty, together with His angels, to bring this generation to its end.

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Matthew 24:29-31.

A FIG TREE PLANTED IN HIS VINEYARD

Read Luke 13:1-10 and Chapter 24 of Jeremiah.

"Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good. For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land: and I will build them, and not pull them down; and I will plant them, and not pluck them up." Jeremiah 24:5-6.

"And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, **Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever.** And presently the fig tree withered away." Matthew 21:19.

"I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Luke 13:5.

"And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." Luke 13:9.

Some disciples came to speak with Jesus about certain Galileans whom Pilate had mistreated. Jesus, however, took the conversation a step further by comparing them to Jews who had been building a tower that collapsed, killing several of them, thereby placing them all in the category of sinners. Next, Jesus taught the parable of the barren fig tree. In spiritual language, God and Jesus use the terms "figs" and "fig tree" to refer to the Jewish people, whereas Jesus uses the image of the "vine" to refer to Christians (see John, chapter 15).

The image of the fig tree planted in the vineyard serves as one of Jesus's prophecies for the modern world. In Jesus's time, the number of Christians was minuscule compared to the Jewish population. Today, the situation has reversed; there are far more Christians than Jews in the world.

Looking at the world today, we see that this remains a perfect description. Planted amidst Christians, the vineyard that multiplies its fruit and expands the Kingdom of God day by day, the fig tree remains barren. Locked within its own segregationism, it contributes nothing to bringing the Lord's Word to the world. On the contrary, it is a source of international unrest and conflict stemming from the possession of sacred territories, generating wars, strife, pain, suffering, affliction, anguish, sin, and death.

God is awaiting fruit from this barren fig tree. Someone is tending to it with fertilizer. Whether or not it will bear fruit, we shall one day know. But time is running out, and this fig tree is on the verge of being cut down.

"And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers." Isaiah 61:5.

JERUSALEM, JERUSALEM

Read chapter 23 of Matthew.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Matthew 23:37-39.

The history of the people of Israel is one of the most turbulent on the planet.

It often seems as though they are in a state of perpetual conflict with the world.

The only period when the United Kingdom of Israel truly experienced peace was during the reign of Solomon. Before and after that time, we see only wars and rumors of war, persecutions, conflicts, and tribulations. Yet, they remain united around their traditions and their faith. This is what defines them as the people of God.

But they rejected the Messiah!

The rejection of the Messiah was, in fact, foreseen by God. Through their rejection and sacrifice of the Master, His Word was spread throughout the world and reached us.

Perhaps there could have been another way, but God knew the path before the foundation of the world.

Yet, the Lord still awaits the faith of Jerusalem.

The Second Coming of Jesus depends on the Jews recognizing Him as the Messiah.

When Jerusalem says, **"Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord"**, then the Son of Man will return to Earth.

Read the Book of Amos.

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it." Amos 8.11-12.

NOW LEARN A PARABLE OF THE FIG TREE

Read chapter 24 of Matthew.

"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." Matthew 24:32-33.

Ao se renovar a figueira (quando o povo que se chama pelo nome de Deus aceitar a Jesus), então o fim estará próximo. Não sabemos quando será a segunda vinda de Jesus, nem os anjos, nem mesmo o Filho; somente o Pai o sabe. Mas podemos prestar atenção à figueira. Quando ela estiver se renovando (quando os judeus começarem a aceitar Jesus), então, o fim desta fase da humanidade estará próximo.

THE POWERS OF THE HEAVENS SHALL BE SHAKEN

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Matthew 24:29-31.

O abominável da desolação é uma profecia feita somente para os judeus de Israel, mas será um marco para toda a humanidade, pois, logo em seguida, aparecerão os sinais do céu que precederão a segunda vinda de Jesus. A sequência cronológica e a ligação temporal são claras. Então, todos os povos da terra serão afetados pelos sinais do céu, e verão o Filho do Homem sobre as nuvens, anunciado pelo som de uma trombeta, com grande poder e glória. Então virá o arrebatamento dos eleitos por meio dos quatro ventos, de todos os lugares da Terra.

THE ONE SHALL BE TAKEN, AND THE OTHER LEFT

Read Luke 17:26-37.

"But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left." Matthew 24:37-41.

Jesus compares His Second Coming to the Flood in the days of Noah and the destruction of Sodom in the days of Lot. This comparison justifies the theological classification of the biblical Flood and the destruction of Sodom as "typologies" of Christ's Second Coming. When referring to His Second Coming, Jesus uses language similar to that regarding the "abomination of desolation." He also speaks of corpses and vultures, noting that whoever remains focused on their own life will lose it. Standing firm in that place, ready to be taken, is part of the test of faith. The elect will be confident, standing tall with heads held high, and exultant.

The description and comparisons are sufficiently clear. Here, Jesus does not speak in parables; rather, He is quite literal and concise, describing the essentials of the events surrounding this momentous transition.

WATCH THEREFORE

Read Matthew 24:42-51 and Matthew 25:1-13.

“Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore, be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.” Matthew 24:42-44.

Some of Jesus' words are encoded in parables or embedded in a prophetic context, anchored in ancient Old Testament texts, and may benefit from explanation, clarification, or insight to be fully understood. Some words speak to the heart but not the intellect; others speak to the intellect yet do not resonate with the heart. However, some words are clear enough to require no explanation, as they speak to both the intellect and the heart, and this is one of them. Yet, this word may leave a question for both heart and intellect: How do we keep watch? There is no better answer than to hold Jesus' word in our minds and hearts, and to translate it into actions in our daily lives, keeping in mind that the Lord's coming is near and that He wishes to find us watchful when He arrives. The parable of the ten virgins and the parable of the talents make it clear that, among the called, not all will be chosen. Jesus calls "foolish" those imprudent virgins who failed to take active measures to keep their lamps burning. This is not a comparison with something from the earthly realm, but a mental image created by Jesus' words, intended to touch, in a non-verbal way, the heart of the negligent Christian who, ignoring these words, failed to maintain constant vigilance. While the parable of the ten virgins speaks to the hearts of women, the parable of the talents addresses the reason of men; men who are on the verge of neglecting the talents granted by God for the expansion of His Kingdom, leaving the responsibility for salvation to the called; for many are called, but few are chosen.

COME, YE BLESSED OF MY FATHER

Read Matthew 25:31-46.

“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Matthew 25:31-34.

In concluding this phase of humanity, Jesus reveals that incarnation is nothing more than a great test for human beings. The **“kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world”** is destined for those who have learned to show mercy to the needy: the sick, the imprisoned, the hungry, the thirsty, and the naked. The “children of God” are those who align themselves with the Creator’s mercy and help minimize the evil that exists on Earth. However, for those who do not align with Divine Mercy and simply ignore the evil they could have mitigated, destiny is vastly different. In this passage, Jesus completely disregards individuals' beliefs. On the contrary, many who believed themselves saved—for one reason or another—are left bewildered upon learning the criterion for judgment and realizing they do not meet it. This bewilderment is even greater for those who, due to an outward appearance of religiosity or the holding of titles and positions, deemed themselves worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven, when in truth they harbored impure hearts and committed acts of wickedness and negligence.

THE END OF THIS WORLD

Read Mateus 13:24-50.

“The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.” Mateus 13:39-43.

Jesus is quite stern when warning of the fate awaiting those who are not aligned with divine purposes. Yet, He did not come to sugarcoat the hopes of incarnate beings, but rather to bear witness to the unvarnished Truth. Many people refuse to accept these harsh truths, reasoning that Almighty God could not possibly countenance an "eternal" punishment—one seemingly disproportionate to the offense. The fact remains, however, that we do not truly grasp the meaning of the word "eternal" as Jesus uttered it; nevertheless: **“Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.”**

He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God. John 8:47**.**